

THE Atlantic

NOVEMBER 2001

MONTHLY

The Crash of EgyptAir 990



William Langewiesche
investigates a story of
pilot suicide and mass murder

PLUS: P.J. O'Rourke reports
from Israel on the triumph
of normalcy over terror

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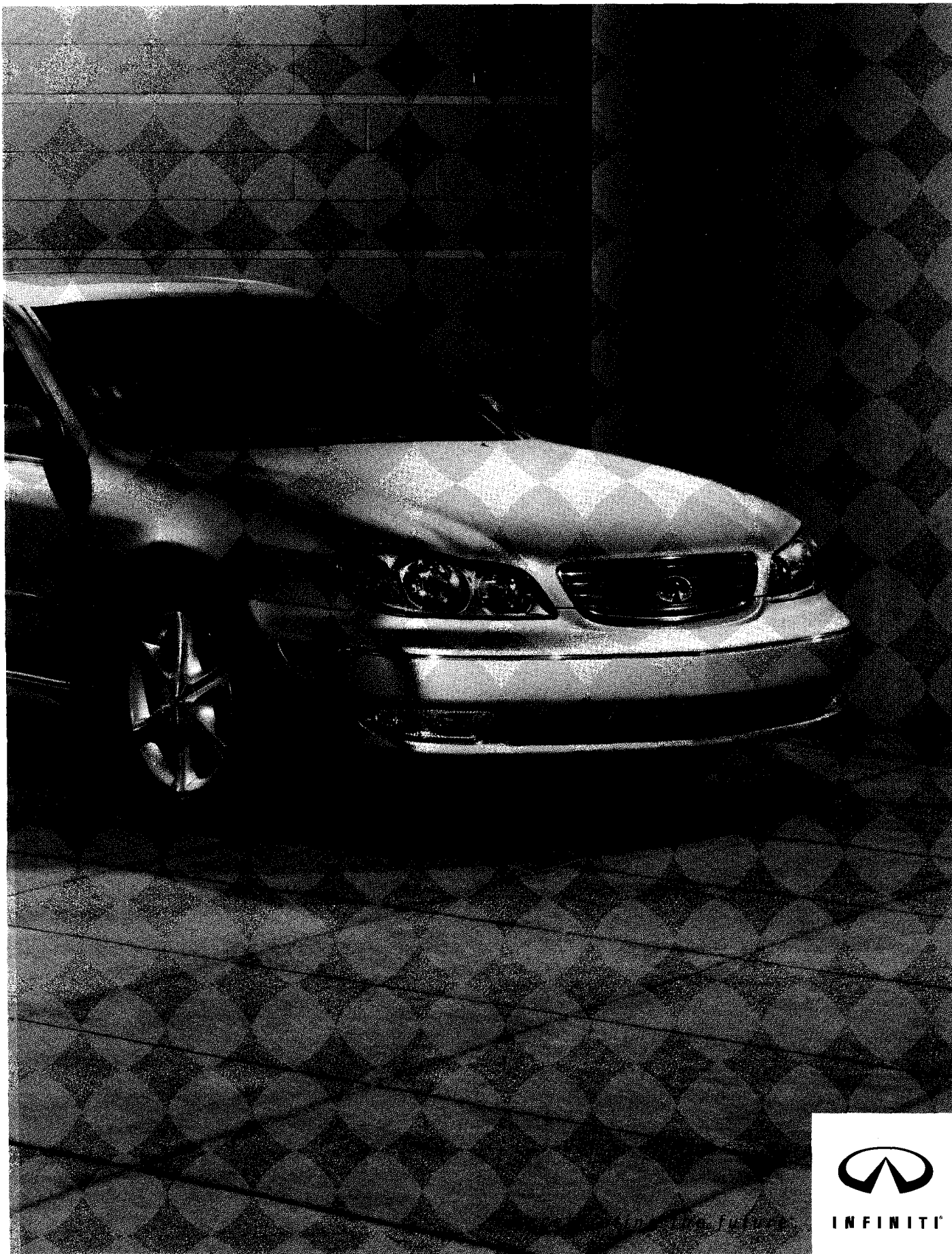
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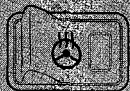


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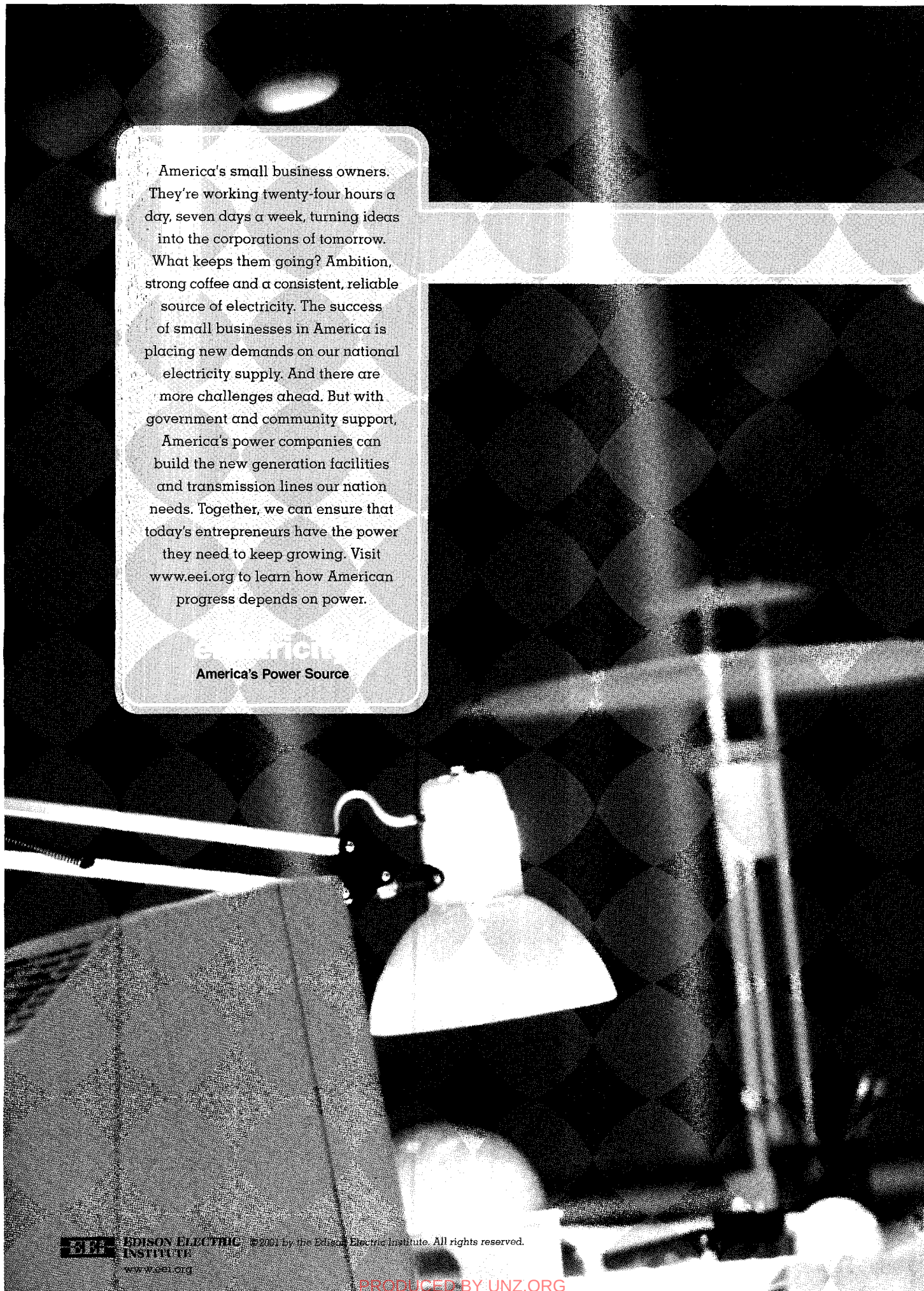
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Where does he get the energy?





77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

On September 11 this issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* was within a few days of closing when what President George Bush called the first war of the twenty-first century began. Soon afterward I read this, in a book called *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, written in 1977 by the political scientist Paul Wilkinson:

The theory of terrorism as a political weapon is based upon a number of assumptions about human behaviour which are either false or unproven: (i) that persons faced with threats to life and limb will ultimately always surrender their allegiances, principles or beliefs to save themselves; (ii) that terrorism invariably leads to terrorisation of the target and victims; and (iii) that consequently when they have been exposed to a given quotient of coercive intimidation they will inevitably suffer a collapse of will and submit to their persecutors.

Among those who have dreamed of revolution and new orders, there has always been much faith in what the nineteenth-century anarchist and theorist of terror Mikhail Bakunin called “propaganda of the deed.” Johannes Most, a German socialist and advocate of terrorism, was an early proponent of mass public slaughter as a means of inducing a transformative fear. All the great monsters of the past century’s great, monstrous societal schemes were convinced of terror’s power to force submission. Hitler thought the London blitz would drive the British to their begging knees; Stalin thought his purges would strike such a fear into the hearts of the Russian people that they would never challenge their masters again. The anarchists were wrong, the fascists were wrong, the communists were wrong. The interesting—and the wonderful—truth is, as Wilkinson wrote, that “the overall track record of terrorism in attaining major political objectives is abysmal.”

P. J. O’Rourke reports in this issue from Israel, where terror aimed at breaking the will of the people has been a fact of life since the nation’s creation. As O’Rourke observes, what is obvious in a land defined by decades of terrorism is that terrorism’s failure is essential, enduring, and in the end,

definitional. It is not that terrorism doesn’t inspire terror. Of course it does; and it inspires other strong emotions as well—fury, despair, grief, a hunger for revenge. But as any visitor to Israel—and, now, to New York or Washington, D.C.—knows, it does not do what its adherents wish to believe it does. It does not cause a people to “suffer a collapse of will and submit to their persecutors.”

Will doesn’t collapse as easily as that, it turns out. People don’t submit to their persecutors as readily as that. The reason for this is basic. The idea behind the philosophy of terror is that inflicting great and random pain on innocent people will shatter the collective illusion about the natural order of

things—God’s in his heaven, and all that—and that the shattered people will consequently suffer a collective emotional implosion. But the fact that bad things happen to innocent people *is* in the natural order of things, and we all know this.

Everybody dies. Every day we are surrounded by death: Newspapers are filled with stories of cruelty and barbarism, murder and rape and torture and famine and disease. Obituary pages are filled with accounts of lives cut short for no good reason. Hospitals are filled with people groaning under the burden of pain that will be relieved only by the end.

If human beings were as terrorists imagine them to be, the weight of these things would be unbearable. It is unbearable for some of us, and it weighs heavily on all of us to at least some degree. The human narrative, as we write it in novels and poems and stories, is a tale of never getting over the shock of life.

The murder of more than 6,000 people on a perfect summer day adds a great deal to that shock, but in the end it only says to us: You know this already.

The real human response to the horrors of life is to put them out of the mind—by focusing on the glories or the duties of life. For this reason terror campaigns provide their own antidote. They provide the people who are supposed to be terrorized with a powerful new duty—to save themselves, to destroy those who would destroy them. This is where we are headed now. —MICHAEL KELLY



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IN THIS ISSUE

On October 31, 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, en route to Cairo from New York, plunged into the Atlantic Ocean sixty miles south of Nantucket, taking 217 lives. Was the tragedy the result of some technical failure—or, as many aviation experts surmised, was it caused deliberately by one of the Egyptian pilots? **William Langewiesche** (“The Crash of EgyptAir 990”) has flown multiple simulations of the crash at Boeing and has pursued the story in Washington, D.C., and Cairo. He argues decisively that the crash was intentional, and sees Egypt’s disavowal as symptomatic of a larger cultural clash. Langewiesche has written frequently for *The Atlantic* about aviation (and many other topics), and is the author of the book *Inside the Sky: A Meditation on Flight* (1998).

Terrorism is a weapon of war aimed at inflicting psychological defeat. How effective is this weapon? That question serves as the subtext of **P. J. O’Rourke’s** account (“Zion’s Vital Signs”) of his journey through a part of the world where terrorism is a constant reality—and where the spirit of ordinary life somehow prevails. O’Rourke, a correspondent for *The Atlantic*, is the author of several books, including *The CEO of the Sofa* (2001).

In 1978 a Hungarian workman apparently unearthed a copper cauldron containing a trove of ancient Roman silver—one of the most exquisite collections ever discovered. No sooner was it brought to light than it returned to the shadows—somehow finding its way into the dangerous international market for stolen antiquities. **Peter Landesman** (“The Curse of the Sevso Silver”) reconstructs what is known about the treasure’s provenance and whereabouts, and about the cast of characters who have shaped its destiny. Landesman is an artist, a novelist, a journalist, and a

screenwriter. His most recent novel is *Blood Acre* (1999).

For much of its thirty-four-year history *The American Spectator* was a spirited, funny, and audacious voice of the political right. And then, suddenly, it destroyed itself. **Byron York** (“The Life and Death of *The American Spectator*”) explains how the *Spectator’s* injudicious and even crackpot crusades against Bill Clinton led not to the President’s downfall but to its own. York is the White House correspondent for *National Review*.

Edward J. Delaney (“The Warp and the Weft”) is the author of the short-story collection *The Drowning and Other Stories* (1999). The title story of the collection, which originally appeared in the March, 1994, *Atlantic*, was selected for *The Best American Short Stories 1995* and *Prize Stories 1995: The O. Henry Awards*.

In Notes & Dispatches this month: **Jack Beatty**, **David Carr**, and **P. J. O’Rourke** comment on the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon; **Rob Nixon** reports from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on that country’s increasing hostility to African immigrants; **Wayne Curtis** from Amarillo, Texas, on the mysterious disappearance from motels of the once ubiquitous NO VACANCY sign; **Peter Davison** from Bantry, Ireland, on provincial Ireland’s ambivalence about prosperity; and **Alex Kodowitz** from Cicero, Illinois, on how a town that hoped to shed its mob-tainted reputation has managed instead to keep it.

Thomas Hine (“Looking Alive”) describes how biological styling is influencing the design of everything from the Speedo Fastskin bathing suit to strange new furniture. Hine, who was the architecture and design critic of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for more than twenty years, is the author of *Populuxe: The Look and*

Life of America in the 1950s and 1960s (1986). His most recent book is *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (1999).

In the first installment of *Palate at Large*, a new series highlighting restaurants worth building a trip around, **Corby Kummer** (“Restaurant Vila Lisa”), an *Atlantic* senior editor, directs readers to a Portuguese hillside town in the Algarve.

Stingy behavior on the part of the very rich sometimes has unexpected payoffs for others—so observes **Mary Killen** (“Penny-Wise”), the advice columnist for *The Spectator*, in London.

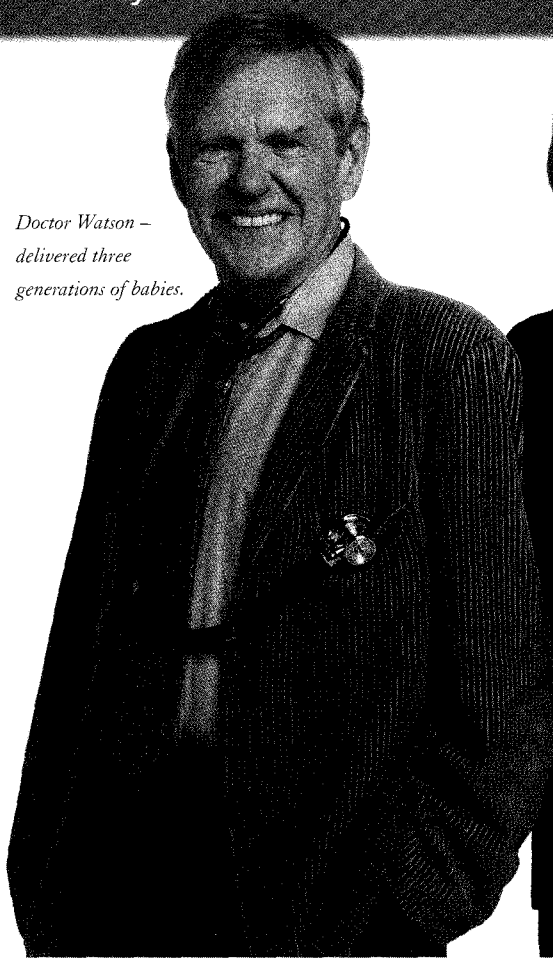
In his celebrated new history of the British empire David Cannadine asserts that its aim was to nurture and reinforce aristocratic values. **Benjamin Schwarz** (“A Bit of Bunting”) unravels Cannadine’s argument and finds it tenuous. Schwarz is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*. His most recent article for the magazine took aim at the sentimental revisionism of Stephen Ambrose’s *The Good Fight*.

Home schooling, once the hothouse preserve of sixties leftists, is now a major redoubt of conservative Christians. **Margaret Talbot** (“The New Counter-culture”) explores home schooling’s rapid growth and surprising evolution. Talbot is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a contributing writer at *The New York Times Magazine*.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote some awful novels and an even worse play. But in his essay on Stevenson’s short career **Brian Doyle** (“A Head Full of Swirling Dreams”) argues persuasively that Stevenson was also one of the most comprehensively accomplished writers in our language. Doyle is the editor of *Portland Magazine*, at the University of Portland, in Oregon, and the author of two essay collections: *Credo* (1999) and, with his father, Jim Doyle, *Two Voices* (1996).

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"The Counterterrorist Myth"

Reuel Marc Gerecht
(July/August, 2001)

A former CIA operative argues that U.S. intelligence, despite claims to the contrary, has not made a dent in Osama bin Laden's operations.

"No case officer stationed in Pakistan can penetrate either the Afghan communities in Peshawar or the North-west Frontier's numerous religious schools, which feed manpower and ideas to bin Laden and the Taliban, and seriously expect to gather useful information about radical Islamic terrorism—let alone recruit foreign agents."

"The Lawless Frontier"

Robert D. Kaplan
(September, 2000)

The tribal lands of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border reveal the future of conflict in the Subcontinent along with the dark side of globalization.

"The story of the lawless frontier, and of its emerging importance as a crisis point, is the story of failure: the failure of a sophisticated people from the industrial and agricultural plain of Punjab—the Pakistani military and political elite—to dominate an unreconstructed tribal people of the high desert."

"Blowback"

Mary Anne Weaver
(May, 1996)

In a perverse twist, the "freedom fighters"—among them Osama bin Laden—trained by the United States in Afghanistan in the 1980s have turned out to be a fount of international terrorism.

"Many veterans of the Afghan jihad have set up an informal network of small, loosely organized underground cells, with support centers scattered around the world: in the United States, the Persian Gulf countries, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Now E-mail and faxes drive the jihad."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Reader's Manifesto

The poet and teacher Dave Smith once told me that he tried, always, to approach his students' writing with generosity and humility. That impressed me then, and continues to impress me, as exactly the right way to approach all writing. Clearly, B. R. Myers ("A Reader's Manifesto," July/August *Atlantic*) would not agree, as is obvious from his cranky and embarrassingly mean-spirited attack on contemporary American literary fiction. Though the piece is so essentially foolish that it's impossible to work up any genuine outrage over it, I did want to respond to one small bit of Myers's carping. Early in the essay he criticizes a phrase in which Annie Proulx thanks her children for putting up with her "strangled, work-driven ways." He finds the phrase incomprehensible. The use of the word "strangled," he writes, "makes no sense on any level." Actually, as anyone compulsively driven by the need to work will understand immediately, it makes obvious sense. It's an implied metaphor, and it's hardly difficult to understand. To be relentlessly driven to work cuts one off from the rest of life. It's as if the need to work had a strangling effect, making it impossible to breathe easily and live life fully. If that "work-driven" state is a regular condition of life, then certainly the victim's "ways" can appropriately be described as "strangled." That Proulx can toss off such a phrase makes her a good writer. That Myers can't comprehend it makes him a weak reader. That he feels free to lecture us for being naive enough to admire Proulx's writing—in a tone that sounds for all the world like the howling of a frustrated writer—is sad and, of course, pretentious.

Ed Falco
Blacksburg, Va.

Finally you have published something that reflects the thoughts and feelings of the intelligent but long-suffering reading public. B. R. Myers's "A Reader's Manifesto" caught the way many of us feel about the warped "literary" language of the modernist and postmodernist authors who have been foisted on the public by critics and Ivy League snobs.

My only regret is that Myers did not finish the job by also dealing with these "critically acclaimed" authors' lack of ideas and heart, as well as plot and clarity. As for me, I will stick to the canons of Romanticism, for there one can feel beauty, the sense of an ideal, and a reason for hope, rather than despair.

Betty Knight
Studio City, Calif.

I had read fifteen pages of B. R. Myers's sixteen-page diatribe against modern fiction before arriving at the perfect bit of figurative language to describe what he was doing: "continuously darning the air in one spot."

Bev Lehman
Jefferson, Iowa

Although B. R. Myers is provocative and has a number of valid criticisms about the mysterious ramblings of many contemporary writers, I must take issue with his criticism of the passage from *Snow Falling on Cedars*. I am a person with a handicap similar to that of the character described, and I found this to be an extremely accurate description of some of my thoughts and feelings relating to my situation. I had hoped that other readers might have experienced some empathy for this character based at least partly on David Guterson's sensitive portrayal. I am sorry that Myers chose to completely miss its message, and I hope that he is not this cruel in real life.

D. Horn
Ann Arbor, Mich.

What B. R. Myers ignores is that literary style is not a pose or mere ornamentation. It is the writer's means of looking at the world and making sense of it. Updike's metaphors transform Rabbit from the middle-class mundane into the mythical; DeLillo's fractured sentences mirror the distortions produced by the culture of consumerism and technophilia; Morrison's biblical cadences endow the humble with dignity. Hewing to the straightforward is good advice for undergraduates; writers of talent, however, know how to create and exploit whole universes of expression beyond this narrow range.

Dan Cryer
New York, N.Y.

After finishing B. R. Myers's scathing condemnation of so many books I mistakenly found enjoyable, I felt I might never read modern fiction again. But, ever hopeful, I marched off to my local library in search of a title by Myers. Alas, nothing.

All bashing aside, I would love to see Myers's list of the ten to fifteen all-time greatest works of fiction. I would promise to read them all.

Michael E. Zuller
Great Neck, N.Y.

"A Reader's Manifesto" reminds me of how Winnie-the-Pooh failed to trap a heffalump. The best critique of affected style at the expense of credible content is still Mark Twain's putdown "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses." The faults Myers laments have been common in fiction at least since Homer, perhaps since the Gilgamesh Epic. We fail to observe them in past literature only because bad writing gradually disappears from the shelves of later readers, except a few literary antiquarians.

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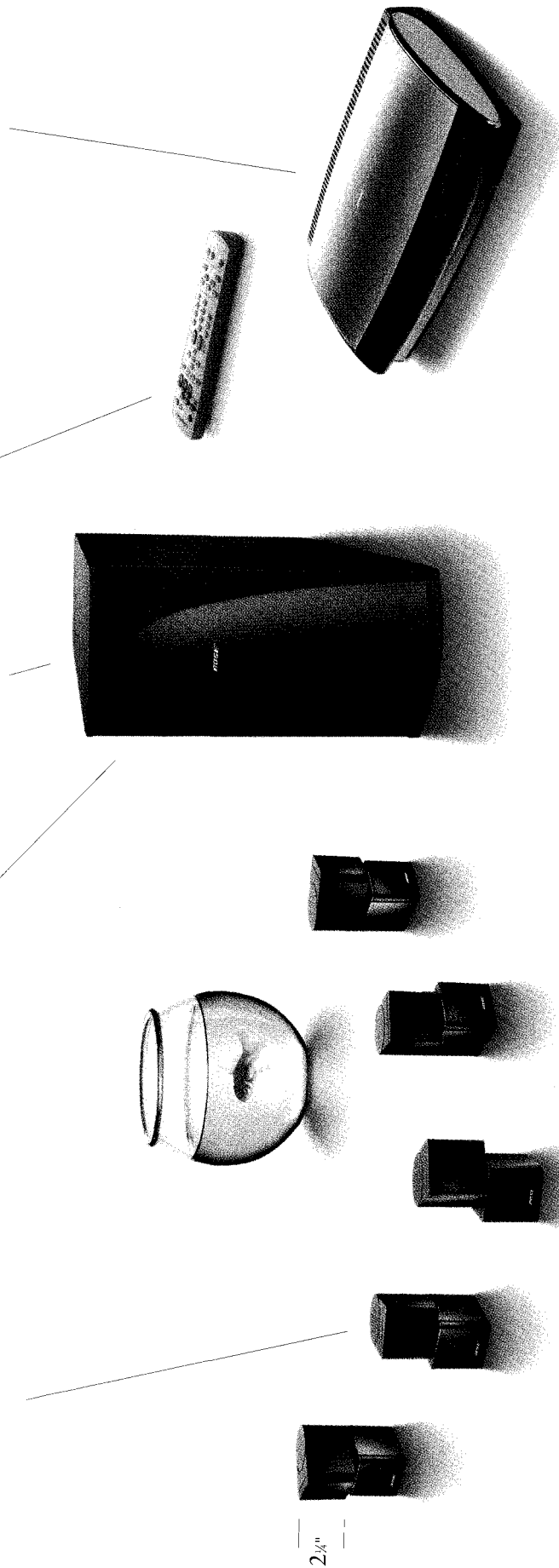
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In its weirdness, its insistence on fighting battles against no opponent, B. R. Myers's essay is troubling. His critique of some elements of the styles of several authors need not be a dismissal of the whole of literary fiction, no matter how prominent those authors may be, and even if their "pretentiousness" could be found in the work of a handful of other writers. If Annie Proulx goes a bit far in attempts to keep language vibrant and surprising, and even if Cormac McCarthy wants to tell us all that he doesn't understand Henry James, this doesn't represent a widespread disavowal of classic literature. If the idea that "contemporary fiction possesses greater relevance" than the work of, say, Joseph Conrad is really prevalent (which is debatable), that doesn't mean that anyone questions the overall value of reading classics, or that people are reading DeLillo more than Bellow.

Sure, the "reorientation toward tradition" that Myers calls for could do a lot for fiction, but it's been present all along in the works of many writers—or at least, it's fair to say, a lot of respected authors have straightforward styles and emphasize narrative over the "postmodern" trappings Myers is opposed to.

What Myers's evidence points to is an excess found in the work of some writers, some disturbing trends, and perhaps a lot of permissiveness in a handful of critics. But why does Myers think that winners of big awards are representative of an art form as a whole? And that the only voice commenting on contemporary fiction is that of *The New York Times*? If he is exasperated with what the heavyweights valorize, he should stop conferring power on them by implying that their voices, and the voices of a few big authors, speak for an entire genre. If he looks around, he can find contemporary works to supplement his "books that Cormac McCarthy doesn't understand."

Jeff Maehre
Owosso, Mich.

Thank you for the delightfully clear prose in "A Reader's Manifesto." B. R. Myers's raging against the current literary tide was entertaining, thoughtful, and necessary.

Ruth Perschbacher
Asheville, N.C.

B. R. Myers replies:

"Strangled, work-driven ways" is an unsustained metaphor uncannily similar to one example used in Fowler's *Modern English Usage*—namely, "stunted and sterilized" means of education. Some nouns simply do not work with metaphorical adjectives.

D. Horn will remember that I criticized David Guterson's depiction of the handicapped character for its form and not its content. As for real-life cruelty, Guterson has gone on record in *The Washington Post* as saying, "I make recreation out of taking the life of small birds."

Dan Cryer misinterprets "A Reader's Manifesto" as a demand for straightforward prose. I can only refer him to the last paragraph of the introduction, in which I distinguish between the "good Mandarin" of Joyce and Woolf and the "crude affectation" of today's mediocrities. I should also point out that none of the excerpts in the essay evinces complex prose, and that I conclude with a declaration that I will sit out the current malaise by reading writers such as Proust and James. At first I was surprised that anyone could have read the essay so inattentively as to miss all this. Then I remembered: Mr. Cryer is a literary critic.

Chain Bookstores

Three cheers for Brooke Allen, for deflating the myth of the evil chain bookstore ("Two—Make That Three—Cheers for the Chain Bookstores," July/August *Atlantic*). Most of the people bemoaning Barnes & Noble (with its sinister café) are urbanites who are used to great big-city bookstores. I am not: I grew up in a dreary suburb of Miami, with nothing but an ill-organized Waldenbooks and a few Christian bookstores nearby. When Barnes & Noble arrived, it was better than manna falling from heaven. The health section was suddenly more than a mishmash of bad cookbooks. The philosophy section was no longer a dumping ground for *The Book of Mormon*, but actually contained philosophy. Far from crushing individuality, chain bookstores rescue (and I speak from experience) suburbia from literary mediocrity: there's enough space to stock Danielle Steel and Günter Grass. Nor has the charm of the small bookstore been lost: it was never there to

begin with. Have you ever been in a small bookstore? After you walk in, the manager will come from the back and watch you thumb through the two or three books worth reading, and give you a dirty look when you leave empty-handed. Some charm. The blessing of the big chains is the anonymity they confer: reading is a solitary hobby, and the chains rightly leave you alone with your Danielle Steel, your Günter Grass, and your overpriced café latte.

Glenn Kinen
Stuttgart, Germany

Brooke Allen makes a good case for the large chain bookstores. I frequently shop at both Borders and Barnes & Noble, and rarely have I been disappointed (although Borders does not have a biography section). I have even bought books online. In San Antonio the large chains concentrate their many stores on the north side of town, where the more affluent reside. This leaves the south, east, and west sides with no bookstores at all. The snobbery lies not with the independent stores' clientele but with the major chains, who think that the book-buying public lives on only one side of town. Red-lining is not limited to insurance companies. So two cheers may be called for, but until the large chains enrich the cultural life of all the residents of San Antonio, the third should be withheld.

Robert A. Shivers
San Antonio, Texas

I have availed myself of the vast selection of the local (Poughkeepsie) Barnes & Noble, and yes, it is a great convenience to walk into such a place and know that if a book is in print, it's probably there. But the advent of the Barnes & Noble meant the demise of Fiddler's Green, in Hyde Park, whose folkie owner carried a CD section devoted entirely to folk music and pushed back some of his shelves most Friday nights for folk-music concerts by both local and nationally known talent, thus much enriching the local cultural scene. In a perfect world both would prosper, but short of that, I would still prefer fewer chains and more independents. With the advent of the Internet—and vast numbers of used-book stores—it is

no longer necessary for the local bookseller to stock everything.

Les Herring
Kingston, N.Y.

After reading Brooke Allen's article about chain bookstores, I remembered a visit to one of the vast shopping malls in Minneapolis a few years ago. Our older son was at that time interested in the institution of slavery in the United States, so I wanted to give him a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I went to the counter in a chain bookstore and asked the young lady there if Harriet Beecher Stowe's book was in stock. Pointing to a distant corner, she said (this is true), "Yeah, you'll find it over there under 'Architecture.'"

C. F. Nielsen
Steinen, Germany

Russia's Economy

Jeffrey Tayler, in "Russia Is Finished" (May *Atlantic*), offers a portrayal of Russia that uses a misunderstanding of current realities to reach extremely unlikely predictions about the country's future.

Since the beginning of Russia's transition to a market economy, journalists working here have repeated *ad nauseam* the idea that in order to do business in Russia it is necessary to have a "roof," or protection. I have been doing business in Moscow for five years now, and I still cannot explain why journalists and freelance writers cling to this conviction in the absence of confirming evidence.

The businesses I have operated or invested in include food processing; pharmaceutical distribution, both wholesale and retail; gasoline wholesaling; financing and marketing steel products; export of rubber and related chemicals; production of auto parts; and oil exploration and production. I have never made a payment to a "roof," nor have I ever been solicited for such a payment.

One of the pillars of Tayler's argument is that such payments are an integral part of the Russian economy. He writes, "It has been estimated that 80 percent of Russian businesses pay *dan*' ('tribute,' or protection money), to a *krysha* ('roof,' or racket), but the real number is probably higher; one may assume that any business operating open-

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ly has a *krysha*." If I am doing anything, I am operating openly. Our business headquarters are in central Moscow, ten minutes' walk from one of the city's busiest areas, Pushkin Square. Our security measures are as follows: all visitors are required to sign in at the front desk. According to Tayler, gangsters should be lined up around the block to shake me down. Where are they?

I am aware of the use of the word *dan*' by journalists, including some who have written for *The Atlantic*, but I have never encountered it in daily life. Since I am involved in more than five businesses, I must assume I should be paying someone *dan*'. Why am I not?

Perhaps businessmen operating in Moscow are a more reliable source of information on business conditions in Moscow than are freelance writers.

Another pillar of Tayler's argument is that Vladimir Putin's plans will wreck the Russian economy—if any economy is left here to wreck.

Putin became acting President of Russia at the beginning of 2000. Since then the top income-tax rate has been cut from 35 to 13 percent; revenue taxes have been cut from four to one percent; central-bank reserves have risen from \$10 billion to \$30 billion; the stock market has rallied; and the economy grew last year by 8.3 percent, faster than China's. The government budget ran a surplus for the first time since the Romanovs. Russian corporations are expected to pay more than \$1 billion in dividends this year. Tayler's verdict? "Putin's plans ... amount to a national death sentence."

How can someone be so wrong and still be in print?

John Haskell
Moscow, Russia

Jeffrey Tayler replies:

Businessmen operating in Moscow, as anywhere else, may be counted on to protect their own interests and to provide self-serving assessments of local conditions. This was certainly the case before the financial crisis of 1998 hit Russia, and John Haskell's letter shows that nothing has changed. I know nothing of Haskell's businesses in Moscow, and cannot comment on them. I based my description of the prevalence of such crime in Russia on my experience as co-manager of a

security company in Moscow, and also on eight years of residence in and travel around Russia, from Magadan, in the east, to the border with the Baltics, in the west. In certain spheres foreigners (who account for an insignificant percentage of businessmen in Russia) have been targeted for extortion less often than Russians have, though they are especially vulnerable in businesses with heavy cash flows, such as nightclubs and restaurants, and suffer repeated, much-publicized violations of shareholder rights at the hands of unscrupulous Russian partners. That contracts in Russia are often unenforceable without the proper "roofs" and connections remains a significant impediment to foreign investment. This has all been thoroughly documented.

*I cannot explain Haskell's never having encountered the word *dan*', but one possibility is ignorance of Russian—a distinguishing characteristic of many Western businessmen in Russia. There are other slang terms for such payments, but *dan*' has historical relevance; it means both the payments that *mafiya* "roofs" extort from their victims and the money paid by subjugated Slavs to Mongol overlords in the Middle Ages.*

In citing my reference to the death sentence Putin is imposing on Russia, Haskell omits key words and misapplies the quotation. What I said in full was, "Putin's plans to strengthen the state (at least as he envisions it), if carried out, would amount to a national death sentence." As regards the economy, Haskell's contentions mix the sort of ignorance and gullibility for which Westerners doing business in Russia have become famous among Russians. The rich alone benefit from the flat tax, which amounts to a tax increase for the vast majority of Russians: poor Russians once paid 12 percent; now they pay 13 percent. The stock-market "rally" stems in great measure from high oil prices (and the concomitant increased share prices of Russian oil companies; Russia is the world's third largest producer of crude oil), as do the growth in the central bank's foreign-currency reserves and the rise in GDP. Haskell might like to know that the Russian government's own economic-development program conflicts with his optimism and forecasts a drop in annual growth of GDP from 8.3 percent to 2.6 percent by 2003, continued double-digit inflation and unemployment, falling exports, and minimal increases in foreign investment. Capital flight continues unabated.

Advice & Consent

Do the races exist? As a philosopher who counts vague adjectives' semantics as a research interest, I was intrigued by Jake Sibley's remark in the July/August Letters about Steve Olson's "The Genetic Archaeology of Race" (April *Atlantic*). Racial and biological groups "do not exist," Sibley argues, because "genetic and physical ... variations in the human population occur across a continuum."

In particular, I wonder whether his argument might not prove a tad too much. For consider: animals' life cycles unfold in continuum fashion—a fact that no doubt makes framing uncontroversial definitions of "living" and "dead" an elusive goal. Yet to conclude on this basis that death "does not exist," or that a parrot can't *really* be dead, has the sobriety of an all-too-familiar Monty Python skit.

Timothy Chambers
Providence, R.I.

In his article "Graham Greene's Vatican Dossier" (July/August *Atlantic*), Peter Codman does a great service by revealing two currents within the Roman Curia: a censorious and militantly vigilant one, represented by Cardinal Pizzardo and the Holy Office (now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), and one represented by Cardinal Montini, which is more able to respond to the ambiguities of the human situation without compromising religious truth. In Graham Greene's case the outcome, if not entirely happy, was relatively harmless.

Montini's assistance is characterized as "wise counsel from an unexpected source." I must disagree with that characterization of Montini's intervention. No one closely familiar with the life and ministry of Giovanni Battista Montini, from the start of his career in the Curia through his work as pro-secretary of state, archbishop of Milan, and Pope, would find such counsel to be unexpected. In fact, such action was the norm for this gifted, intelligent, and wise man. His oft-stated conviction was that the truth was apparent to the human mind, needed no defense, and would win out in the end.

Would that we had individuals of Montini's ability, disposition, and vision in the Church today.

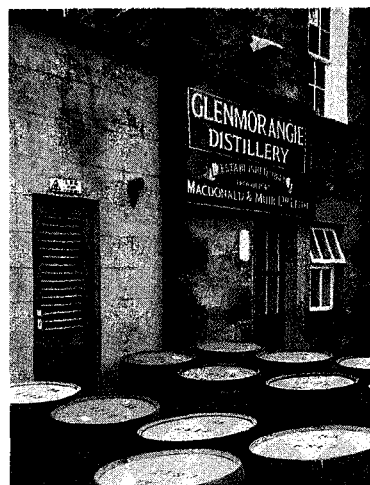
*Steven C. Moore
Parish priest
Anchorage, Alaska*

To describe Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Robert Lowell as having had "sojourns" at McLean for "needed respites" is insulting to those who have lived in the fire of bipolar disorder ("The Mad Poets Society," by Alex Beam, July/August *Atlantic*). Psychiatric hospitalizations are hardly "sojourns" or "needed respites." To describe Robert Lowell as a "repeat user" and Anne Sexton as "never [having] had her ticket punched at McLean" is to grossly trivialize the anguish of repeated miserable psychiatric hospitalizations and the anguish of never having had the treatment you think might have been effective. Beam's choice of word and phrase betray an open hostility to the mentally ill and the artistically gifted.

*Joel Rice
La Grande, Ore.*

In his "As American as Women's Soccer?" (June *Atlantic*), Scott Stossel made the daft assertion that because women goalkeepers typically are smaller than their male counterparts, "there's more scoring in the women's game." This is not true. If height were the key factor in keepers' effectiveness, they would be the size of basketball centers. They are not, however; agility and anticipation are more important than height. Moreover, although a typical woman might not be able to reach as far as a man, this advantage to the offense is balanced by myriad other factors, such as the fact that women's shots on goal tend to travel more slowly. In fact, one problem plaguing the new Women's United Soccer Association in its first couple of months was a dearth of goals—by my count, in late June WUSA was averaging 2.69 goals per game, whereas the men's Major League Soccer was averaging 3.17 per game. Women's soccer may be admirable for many reasons, but more goals is not among them.

*Paul Boudreaux Jr.
Takoma Park, Md.*



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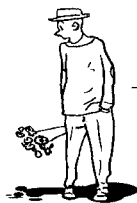
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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

THE SCRAPBOOK

*An accidental encounter with
two briefly famous lives*

.....

"Charlestown 6." The road sign came as a surprise, and stirred a memory. I had ventured into New Hampshire in order to pick up a child at camp; unexpectedly, the route now offered a collateral opportunity. There was time to spare, and I turned off the state highway and headed into town. The detour was only for about a hundred years.

Charlestown was familiar because of a scrapbook that came into my hands one afternoon three decades ago, when I worked a summer job at a sprawling flea market in Connecticut. Some boxes of books had just been taken off a truck—the residue of an estate sale. They contained mostly a collection of bound volumes of *The Harvard Crimson* from 1893 through 1912, which for some reason I needed to have. The owner of the flea market didn't really deal in books, and he sold the boxes to me for \$12.

The most important volume in them was one I hadn't seen and discovered only later, buried at the bottom. It was a scrapbook, as big as an old Bible, compiled in 1898 by a man mourning the death during childbirth of his wife and newborn son. The scrapbook opens with an inscription in pencil on the flyleaf:

Words kindly meant, sweet in thought,
softening the sorrow if they could not
remove it.

They were and are gratefully
appreciated by me.

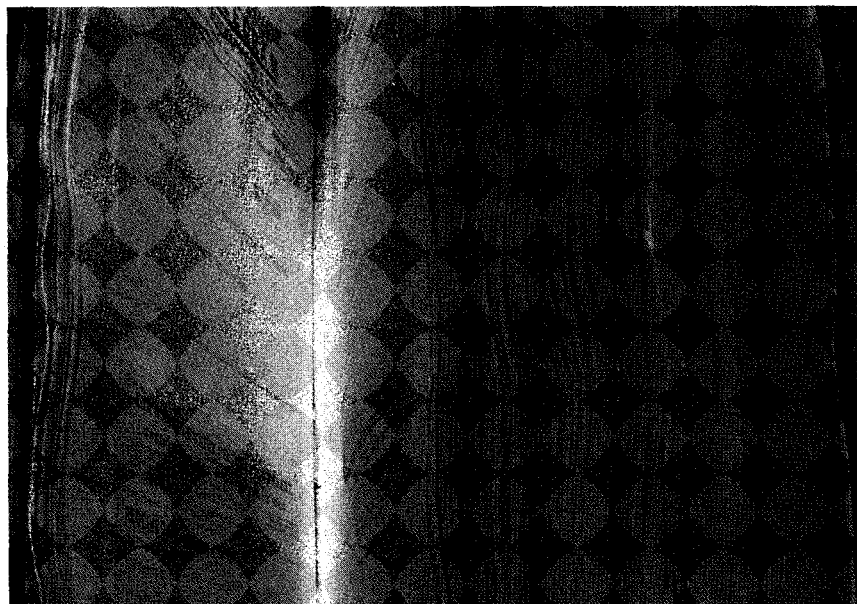
Chas. Hoyt.

And then, on page after page, carefully pasted down and sometimes annotated, come all the telegrams and letters and calling cards and newspaper clippings that accumulated in the days after his loss.

Charles H. Hoyt was the proprietor of the Madison Square Theater and a writer of farces—one of the most successful playwrights of Gilded Age New York. Hoyt's wife, Caroline Miskel Hoyt, was a rising young star of the stage, renowned for her beauty and charm. Charles Hoyt's name means nothing to most people now, but two songs from one of his shows, *A Trip to Chinatown*, are still widely familiar—"The Bowery" and "After the Ball." Charles

A NEW HOYT FARCE." "HER CHILD ALSO DEAD."

Hoyt saved everything. He received scores of telegrams—beige rectangles of cheap paper bearing the classic logo and promotional apparatus of The Western Union Telegraph Company ("21,000 Offices in America. Cable Service to All the World"). Most of the messages are printed in blue or purple teletype; some of them are handwritten, displaying the varied but fluid penmanship of the clerks



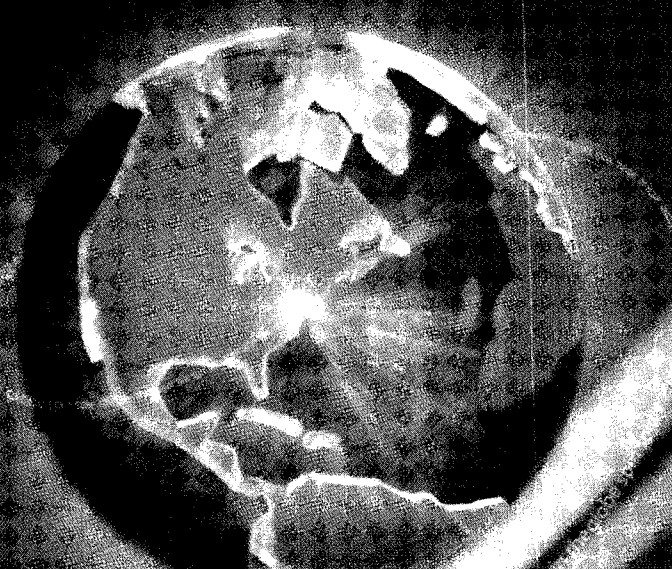
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSAMOND W. PURCELL

and Caroline lived on Thirtieth Street, near Madison Avenue, and moved in the highest theatrical and artistic circles. When Caroline died, on October 2, 1898, at the age of twenty-five, the event was given prominent coverage in all the New York newspapers—the *Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Journal*, the *Sun*, the *Tribune*, the *Herald*, the *Press*, the *World*, the *Telegram*, the *Telegraph*: "END CAME SUDDENLY." "SHE WON GREAT SUCCESS IN 'A CONTENTED WOMAN.'" "WAS ONE OF MOST BEAUTIFUL OF YOUNGER ACTRESSES." "MADE A SENSATION IN 'A TEMPERANCE TOWN.'" "WAS SOON TO REAPPEAR IN

who rendered dots and dashes into English. Florenz Ziegfeld, the theatrical manager and producer of the Ziegfeld Follies, sent a telegram, and so did his wife, Anna Held, the diminutive, hourglass-waisted French comedienne who was famous for bathing in milk. (Her message was transcribed, "*Receiver mes condoléances les plus sympathiques.*") Sam Shubert, one third of the theatrical Shubert Brothers, who would die in a train wreck a few years later, sent a telegram, as did the theatrical manager Charles Frohman, who would go down with the *Lusitania*. There is a cable from James J. "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, who wrestled the

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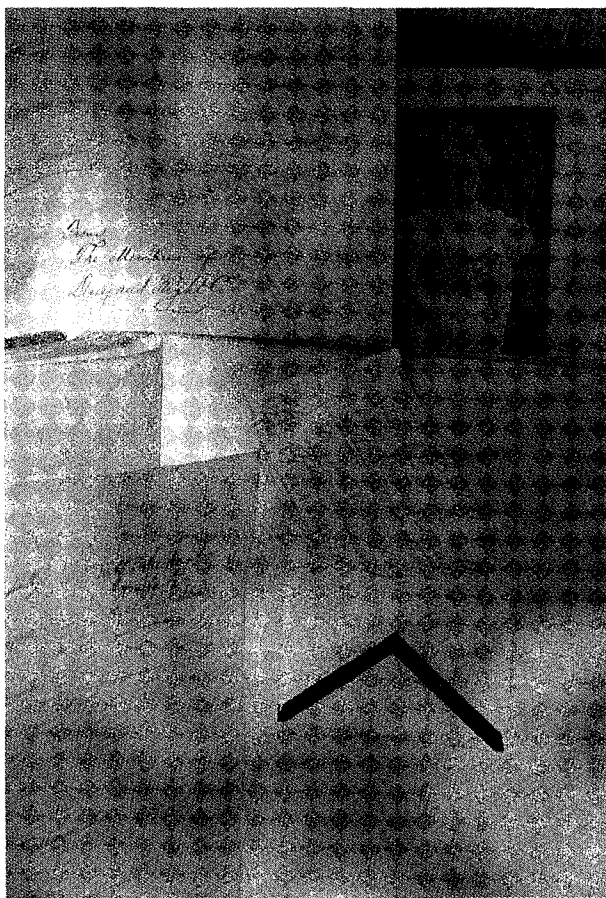
heavyweight boxing title from John L. Sullivan, and one from Charles G. Dawes, who would win a Nobel Peace Prize (for the economic reconstruction of Germany after World War I) and serve as Calvin Coolidge's Vice President.

When he had finished mounting the telegrams, Hoyt moved on to the personal letters, affixing one to a page, sometimes using the envelopes as pockets. He received condolences from the great Broadway impresario David Belasco and from the distinguished actress Minnie Maddern Fiske. ("My dear sir," she wrote, "It was not my good fortune to know your lovely wife but even so I have been sorely grieved at her death and wished deeply to tell you so.") The notepaper and envelopes are often thickly edged in black, a form of stationery once standard in the repertoire of bereavement. Personal calling cards were once standard too—left on a tray after a sympathy call, or sent along with flowers. Hoyt pasted them into the book when he was finished with the letters, several to a page. The cartoonist Thomas Nast left his card.

Newspaper clippings fill out the scrapbook, yellowing and brittle; for reference Hoyt preserved the names and datelines of the newspapers and pasted them above the stories, which report the sudden onset of calamity and offer admiring assessments of Caroline Hoyt's brief career. "It has been a long time," the *New York Journal* observed, "since a death in the theatrical profession has created such a profound sentiment of sorrow." The newspaper stories often end with some variant on the following (from the *New York Press*): "The burial will take place near Mr. Hoyt's home in the granite hills of

New Hampshire, close by the quaint old town of Charlestown. A special car will take the body there to-morrow."

Charles Hoyt, for all his success on Broadway, was at heart a New Hampshire man. He was born in Concord, and served a term in the state legislature. Charlestown, where he maintained a large house, lies on the Connecticut River, roughly halfway between Keene and Hanover. There, in the village cemetery, Caroline Miskel Hoyt was laid to rest, the baby boy in her arms. Among the abundant tributes of flow-



ers was a bouquet with a white ribbon bearing the words "Last Act." The newspaper article relating this fact is the last item in Hoyt's scrapbook.

But it was not the last act. Over time I have collected some information about what happened to Hoyt. It turns out that he survived Caroline by little more than two years. He had lost his first wife, Flora Walsh, in 1892; the loss of a second, together with a child, seems to have unhinged him. Press accounts make reference to his condition with a

baroque and circumventing delicacy. For a while Hoyt was confined to a sanatorium in Hartford. Then he returned to Charlestown. He died there in November of 1900, at the age of forty-one. Friends from New York came up by train for the funeral; theaters in New York that night went dark. A local newspaper, *The Claremont Advocate*, preserved the scene at the mausoleum.

Mr. Lane, the undertaker, with assistance, placed the casket in the niche reserved, between Flora Walsh and Caroline Miskel Hoyt, and the numerous floral tributes were then placed at the further corridor, between the walls ... As the western sky was tinged with the lowering gleams of the sun, the Mausoleum was lighted up with a beauty never to be seen again, for all that remained of this line of Hoyts were enclosed within the walls.

The mausoleum in the Charlestown cemetery was not hard to find—a granite structure with a slate roof and HOYT chiseled on the lintel. The ornate bronze doors were sealed tight. I asked a groundskeeper if the mausoleum meant anything to him. He replied with a shrug of genial helplessness and went back to work. The place where Hoyt's mansion once stood, on Main Street, is now occupied by a bank.

The article in the *Advocate* a century ago was probably correct in one respect: that the tomb's interior would never again see the sun. But I'm not so sure that the monument holds all that remains of "this line of Hoyts." The scrapbook, after all, has continued to circulate in the outside world. To whom it was entrusted under the terms of Hoyt's will I have not discovered; perhaps it went to the primary heir, a man named Frank McKee. Somehow it passed safely down the generations until a brief moment of peril at the flea market, when it was accidentally rescued. Over the years I have shown the scrapbook to many people, all of whom have been drawn in and touched by the tragedy it distills. The scrapbook is now in the custody of the Charlestown Historical Society.

Charles Hoyt wrote some of the most successful farces of his era. He might have appreciated the irony that it is his grief that remains most palpably alive. ▀



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NOTES & DISPATCHES

ORDER IN THE FAMILY

*Not our politicians but our
public servants have called
us to a higher standard*

.....

War is hell on social justice. The four American wars of the past century derailed broad movements of reform: progressivism died in the hate-the-Hun mobilization of World War I; the New Deal ended with World War II; Harry Truman had to abandon his domestic liberalism to win conservative support for the Korean War; and Lyndon Johnson saw his Great Society disappear with Vietnam. War has cost Americans more than battle casualties: it has cost us a fairer society. If we really are in a new world war today, at least reform won't be one of its victims this time. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon derailed a debate over whether to cut the capital-gains tax—not, say, a debate over a more equitable sharing of the burdens and benefits of globalization.

The upwelling of national solidarity manifest in the wake of the attack makes this heart hope that greater social decency will be not one of the war's victims but, perhaps, one of its results. This is the British model of social progress through war. The British people, not the British army, were Hitler's targets; it took three years before the number of British soldiers killed exceeded the number of women and children killed at home. Enduring German air attack for five years (43,000 civilians were killed during the blitz of 1940–1941 alone), Britons struck a new social metric, one reflected in wartime plans for egalitarian postwar institutions. "It is crucial," George Orwell wrote as he saw his countrymen emerge from the ordeal of war, "to break the grip of the monied class on the whole. The England

that is only just beneath the surface, in the factories and the newspaper offices, in the aeroplanes and the submarines, has got to take charge of its own destiny"—or else the country would remain "a family with the wrong members in charge." Aneurin Bevan, the Labour politician, wrote, "There will have to be a great recasting of values. The conception that those who produce ... are inferior and must accept a lower status than the speculator must go." The welfare state, a British

however briefly, that order. As it happens, Jack Welch published his megabucks book *Jack: Straight From the Gut* the day of the attack. Here is a man who has bragged of firing something approaching 100,000 people and has won the regard of the business press for it. What kind of society makes a man like that a hero? The firemen picking their way through the rubble at the World Trade Center stand for something better, nobler. They incarnate the ethic of solidarity and mutual aid that so many Americans have responded to and lived out since the attack. Not our politicians but our public servants have called us to a higher standard. Perhaps a "recasting of values" is already under way. —JACK BEATTY



coinage, was to be the postwar answer to the warfare state. "Never Again" was the slogan of the rejuvenated Labour Party that swept the Tory warrior Winston Churchill out of office at the meridian of his triumph, in the midst of the Potsdam Conference with Truman and Stalin.

Orwell's and Bevan's words could have been written about the America of the 1990s—a family with the wrong members in charge, a society in which the speculator ranked higher than the fireman. This disaster has upended,

NEW YORK CITY

A NEW MASK

*The terrorists temporarily created a
civil society in New York—but the city
can't mind its manners forever*

.....

To have the attention of a nation is hardly novel in a city that's been ground zero for more than a century. Living in the Mae West of municipalities, New Yorkers are used to people staring. People live here because they *want* to be noticed. But New York's starring role in history's most viewed piece of videotape—a whole new genre of terror porn—brings with it not just more notoriety but unwanted sympathy.

New Yorkers can stand anything save the nation's pity.

However well-meaning, and however important for those who give and those who receive, the sympathy alters only the isolation of the tragedy, not its dimensions. And once the questions from distant relations switched from Where were you? to How are you?,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARCELLUS HALL

people here did not know how to respond. As with the huge quantities of blood that arrived after the attack, New York is having trouble finding places to store all the consolation. Everyone in the city is so busy putting on a stiff upper lip—Damn that bin Laden and the disappeared 1 and 9 train; I guess we'll have to walk—that the embrace of our countrymen becomes one more thing to put up with.

"The department moves forward," one firefighter told me, speaking with more firmness than defiance, even as he dug for 350 of his colleagues two days after the towers fell. "This thing was around a long time before me, and it will be around a long time after me."

In attempting to flatten civil society, the terrorists temporarily created one in New York. Of course, the city can't mind its manners forever. It's too much trouble. Yet returning to a reflexive leaning on the horn when some schmuck gets in your way—a civic necessity in the best of times—seems impossible while the rest of the country is draping your town in nobility. As odd as it sounds, the city's psyche is better equipped to answer back to Jerry Falwell's *schadenfreude*.

Deprived of both the smirks on our faces and the chips on our shoulders, we New Yorkers are looking for a new mask, one that will prove less corrosive to the wearer yet congruent with the threat. It's now okay to complain when the Brooklyn Bridge is backed up from here to kingdom come, but it will never be in good taste to wonder aloud if that's where it's going to be blown to.

Other cities do a much better job of being, without acting, terrified. Jerusalem, a place New York could end up resembling, was carved out of the hatred of others and makes no apologies for its means or its ends. Belfast residents, annealed by decades of neighborly enmity, know that there's no way to look good when you are running for your life. New Yorkers, raised to believe that showing fear is a felony, were left in the aftermath of the attack still wondering how to act when a bomb threat is announced at Grand Central. Probably not for long. —DAVID CARR

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT AUDEN DIDN'T KNOW

The things that stay in place

.....

On September 11, when the Pentagon was hit, Debbie Lehan, the operations manager at my apartment building, in Washington, D.C., and Damon Boone, the lead engineer, moved their cars out of the underground garage and parked them to block both ends of the building's horseshoe drive. Of course that was absurd—as if the terrorists had thought, "World Trade Center, Pentagon, and ... the place on Connecticut Avenue where Naomi Wolf used to live." But by noon all the building's children had been gathered home from school or day care. The children played in the empty half oval. Career daddies and career mommies hovered. The barricaded driveway was absurd, if one could keep from tearing up.

"Better to do *something*," Debbie said.

Damon unlocked the door to the building's roof. We could see the Pentagon on fire across the Potomac. "It makes me angry, scared, sad, all at once," Damon said. According to the theory of terrorism, it was supposed to make him paralyzed with terror.

The traffic on Connecticut Avenue was coming from downtown as if in the evening rush hour. But there was none of the usual honking at the District's unsequenced and haphazardly placed stoplights.

Downtown the cars were gone and the stores were closed. Police officers stood in ones and twos. On the corner of F and Fourteenth Street two businessmen, two bike messengers, and a panhandler were listening to the panhandler's portable radio. A tape of President Bush's first response to the terrorist attack was being broadcast. One of the messengers said, in the voice people use when they're saying something important, "After today things will never be the same." Then he seemed to have one of those moments that came to everyone on September 11, with jumbled thoughts alike in size but wildly mismatched in weight—

pity, rage, how to get the shirts back from the dry cleaner. "Transportation in the air won't be as fast," he said in a smaller voice.

At the corner of Fourteenth and Constitution a policeman set out flares to block the street. The policeman took the plastic caps off the flares and tossed the caps aside with the decisive gesture of a man suspending minor public mores in a crisis. A young man on a bicycle stopped at the curb and said to me, "At least the grocery stores are open. But the trucks can't get to the stores. If it's going to be a big international war, I'll just fast."

The young man had a theory that the terrorism had to do with America's pulling out of the UN conference on racism in South Africa, but he was interrupted by a woman indignant that the portable toilets at the Washington Monument were still in use. "They don't know *what* I could be doing in there," she said.

The grass expanse in the middle of the Mall was deserted except for the homeless, suddenly homeless alone. Like everyone else, they seemed subdued, although they didn't stay subdued. The next day, at Eighteenth and L, I would see a ragged man in the middle of the street shouting, "I'll kill all of you people! I don't like any of you!" No one, including the soldiers who were by then everywhere in Washington, paid attention.

Michele Lieber, a lobbyist who lives in my building, had come downtown with me. Alongside the Mall snack and souvenir trucks were dutifully open. Michele asked a snack-truck proprietor if business was good. "Yes, of course," he dutifully said.

That day, for the first time in thirteen years in Washington, I saw no protesters. And hardly any were around on Wednesday. A reopened Lafayette Park would feature only an old woman with a sign saying WHITE HOUSE ANTI-NUCLEAR PEACE VIGIL SINCE 1981 and a middle-aged hippie on a similar anti-nuclear sleep-out SINCE 1984. The old woman was talking mostly to herself. "They provoked what happened," she said. The hippie was talking to two adolescent

girls with piercings, discussing his pet squirrel.

On Tuesday afternoon even TV crews were absent from the White House vicinity. On Constitution at the Ellipse the ABC White House correspondent Terry Moran was on a lone stand-up, not saying much to the camera. A few people gathered around the TV crew, also not saying much. "We just got here from Slovakia and everything happened," a tourist said.

Michele and I had walked to the reflecting pool behind the Capitol before we saw any more tourists. A family in sports clothes was standing there looking baffled. I introduced myself to the father, and his first words were (one is grateful for not being conspiracy-minded) "We're from Slovakia."

At Bullfeathers, a restaurant on First Street, four or five televisions were on, their volume turned up. A congressman and his female aide were in the men's room, the only place quiet enough for the congressman to do a phone interview. The congressman was saying, "We will make the people who did this pay. It is awfully hard to defend yourself from people who have no respect for human life." He seemed to be pulling in two directions—as did the soldiers on the streets the next day, camouflaged for invisibility and wearing blaze-orange traffic-control vests.

At The Dubliner, a bar on North Capitol Street, two congressional staffers were talking. "The congressional leadership has been whisked off to 'an undisclosed location,'" one said. "As far as I'm concerned, they can keep most of them there." This touched on another theory of terrorism: that the organization of society can be attacked by striking organizations; that we can't organize things ourselves.

"Four Guinness," the first staffer said to the bartender.

"Time to take sides," the second staffer said.

"Time to turn sand into glass," the first said.

Ariel Sharon was on CNN. "This is a war between the good and the bad," he said.

On Monday night, September 10, I had finished an article for this magazine about Israel, a country that has been under terrorist attack for generations, forever, and where I had found daily life to be markedly free of the effects that terrorism is supposed to produce. On Tuesday I didn't want the article to be published. It wasn't grim enough. I was thinking (like hike messengers and everyone else), *After today things will never be the same*. Lines from W. H. Auden's poem "September 1, 1939" came to mind: "Waves of anger and fear / Circulate over the bright / And darkened lands of the earth." By Wednesday I realized that I'd never

known what Auden was getting at with that poem, except, perhaps, in "As the clever hopes expire / Of a low dishonest decade." Apt enough, but "Where blind skyscrapers use / Their full height to proclaim / The strength of Collective Man"—what's that crap? Or this: "Ironic points of light / Flash out wherever the Just / Exchange their messages."

Anyway, Auden was one of the few Englishmen who, when World War II loomed, acted as Hitler would have Englishmen act: he ran away. In Israel waves of anger and fear circulate all the time, but so do jokes, and gossip, and silky evening breezes. So, too, in America. —P. J. O'ROURKE

PORT ELIZABETH

SOUTH AFRICANS ONLY

Africans from all over their war-torn continent have lately been flocking to South Africa. They are generally not met with open arms

.....

When George VI of England went for a swim during a 1947 state visit to South Africa, he bequeathed his title to Port Elizabeth's most popular strand. As a teenager in the late 1960s, I didn't know this when King's Beach—a surfers' hangout—became my favorite haunt. What I cared about was the huge, perfect waves delivered by the Indian Ocean when a light west wind brushed a big south swell.

The beach still bears its royal name, and the waves still roll in impressively. But almost everything else about the place has changed. In the mid-1980s the beach's WHITES ONLY signs began to disappear, along with all the other signs—COLOURED ONLY, INDIANS ONLY, MALAYS ONLY, BLACKS ONLY—that apportioned the coast. More recently the post-apartheid mélange of bathers has been joined by the so-called *makwerekwere*, who have brought to King's Beach a diversity of Babelonian proportions.

"*Makwerekwere*," a derogatory neologism for "foreigners," has entered South African speech during the past few years. The word is supposedly onomatopoeic. The Greeks dubbed foreigners "barbarians" because, to

Greek ears, they brayed "*bar, bar*" in unintelligible tongues; South Africans claim to hear "*kwere, kwere*" when immigrants open their mouths. But the *makwerekwere* aren't just any foreigners: they are specifically African immigrants, and they have been singled out for ridicule and abuse by many black South Africans. Apartheid kept most South Africans isolated from the rest of Africa and deeply ignorant



of its cultures. With the country's democratic turn, culminating in Nelson Mandela's 1994 election as President, unfamiliar, unimagined people started to flock across the border. Since then South Africa has also experienced a relatively modest influx of Eastern Europeans and Asians. However, I've never heard Bulgarians, Russians, or Chinese called *makwerekwere*.

Few of the vendors who line the King's Beach promenade are indigenous South Africans. On one recent public holiday, as some 60,000 bathers packed the beach, I wandered along the mile of stalls. I heard Igbo, Wolof, Swahili, Shona, French, Portuguese, and a host of languages I didn't recognize. I spoke to Cameroonians and Senegalese selling malachite jewelry, to Zimbabweans hawking soapstone shoes, to Namibians, Nigerians, and Angolans surrounded by menageries carved from equatorial hardwoods. I watched a Mozambican fashion miniature hippos and Harley-Davidsons from baling wire.

Port Elizabeth seems an improbable El Dorado. Africa's southernmost city, it is remote from any border. And it lies in one of South Africa's poorest provinces, a region burdened with 40 percent unemployment. But poverty and opportunity are relative, of course. South Africa has a lower per capita GDP than Mexico. Nonetheless, the difference in per capita GDP between South Africa and neighboring countries such as Mozambique and Angola is proportionally greater than that between the United States and Mexico. Since the mid-1990s the roiling wars in central Africa have heightened South Africa's allure for citizens of the dozen or so countries involved in conflict. The murderous violence in Zimbabwe has prompted perhaps a million Zimbabweans to flee to South Africa recently.

One trader I met, who would give his name only as Pierre, told me that he had walked to Port Elizabeth from eastern Congo—a distance of almost 3,000 miles. The journey had taken five months. Now he made a living selling hardwood giraffes, which stretched splay-legged on grass mats before him.

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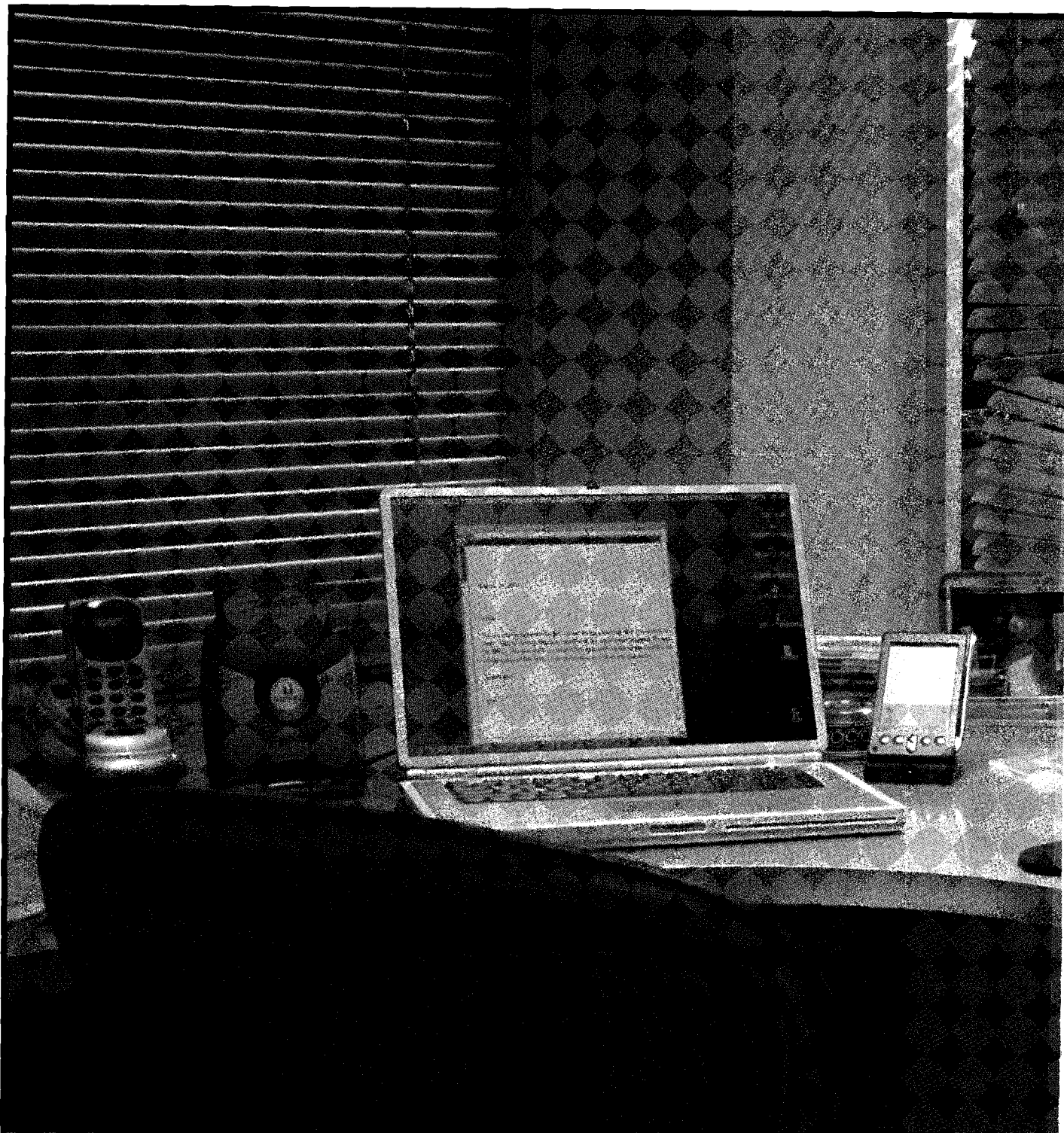
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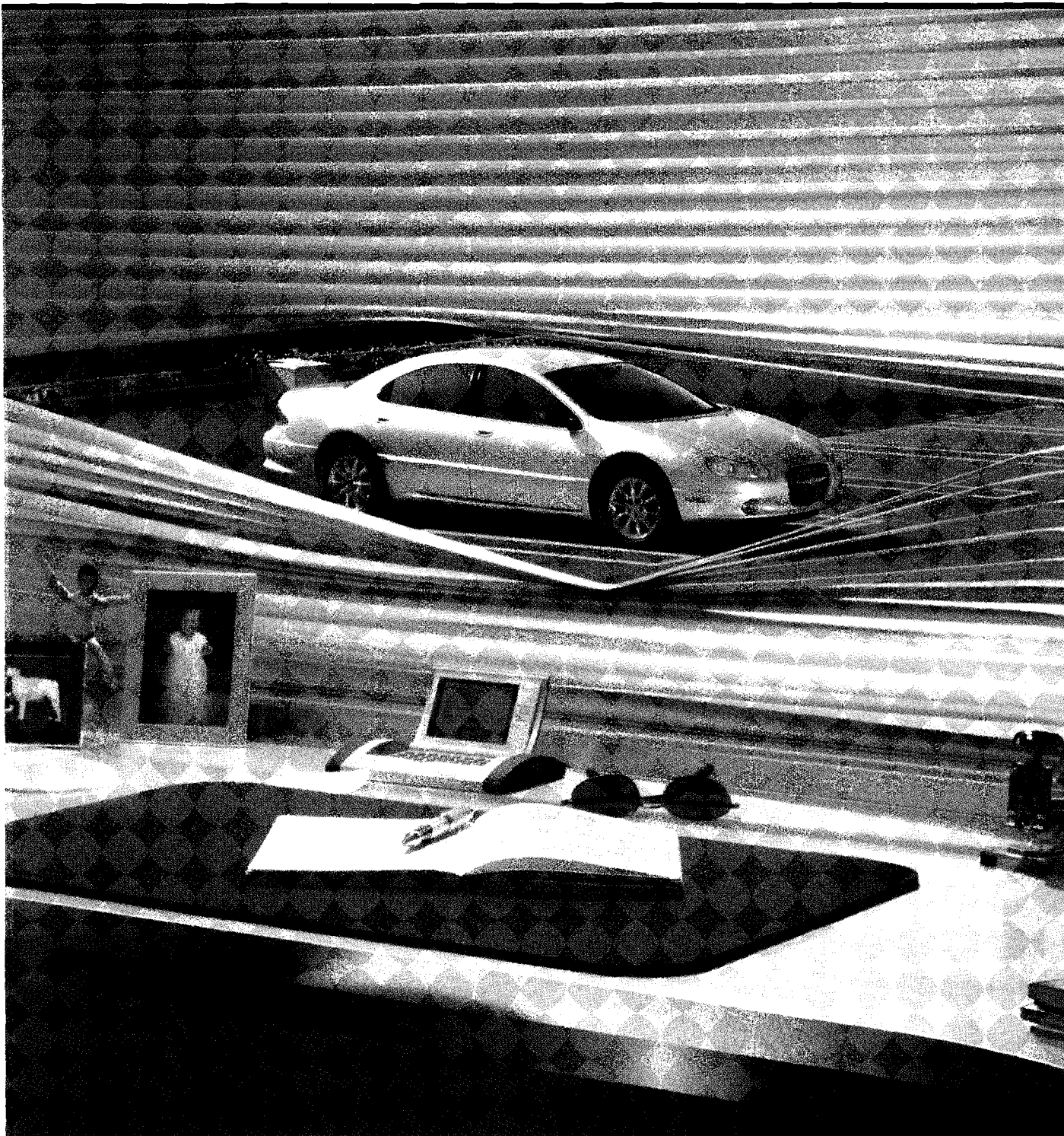


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He also offered me some bootleg tapes of *kwaito* music—a distinctive blend of African syncopation, European house music, and American hip-hop that resulted from and signifies South Africa's new heterogeneity.

Farther down the promenade John Chibwende was selling collapsible wooden stools, each stool leg a bird with an upstretched beak. A plump man with glazed eyes, Chibwende had spent his life savings on a plane ticket to Johannesburg from the Zambian capital of Lusaka, where he had been a pharmacist. Johannesburg terrified him: "Very, very violent," he said. "Every day I worried for my life. 'Makwerekwere': what does that mean? It means nothing. I hate that word." He left Johannesburg for Port Elizabeth in 1998, a week after a notorious xenophobic incident. A crowd returning from a rally held to protest unemployment had suddenly transformed into an incendiary anti-immigrant mob. It killed a Mozambican, throwing him from a train. Two Senegalese were electrocuted when they scrambled onto the train's roof in an effort to escape.

South Africa borders six countries. The borders are indifferently manned. The official attitude toward African immigrants is complicated by a historical debt. President Thabo Mbeki and many government ministers found sanctuary in countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, and Zambia during apartheid's bleakest years. As John Matshikiza, a newspaper columnist and a former activist, wrote recently, "We exiles spent a lot of time living in some of the *makwerekwere* countries ... For the most part we received the kindest hospitality, and our host countries sometimes suffered terrible military reprisals."

But calls for tolerance in the name of recompense have a limited effect on the ground, where the desperate battle the desperate over jobs, shacks, turf, and women. The northerners' unfamiliar languages and sometimes darker skins make them convenient scapegoats for South Africans who struggle on the economic fringes. I have heard it said that "*kwere, kwere*" is more than a mocking imitation of foreign languages—it

is an attempt to replicate the twittering of queleas, small but extremely destructive birds that travel in flocks of hundreds of thousands. One minute the queleas are nowhere in sight; the next they have swept through fields like locusts, devastating the harvest.

Driving back to town from King's Beach, I heard on my car radio that a South African yacht had rescued four castaways drifting in a life raft several miles off the coast of Cape Town. The men had stowed away on a Panamanian vessel when it was docked at Matadi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On discovering the Congolese, the captain had set them adrift.

I thought of the dreams that a young Malian had shared with me after selling me a beautifully crafted pair of red shoes equipped with car-tire soles. When not accosting promenaders, the Malian sketched out his plans: next move, Cape Town; then apply for a visa to get into Europe or America. He disliked South Africa. He did not feel welcome here. "But," he said, "this country, unlike my country, has many, many embassies." —ROB NIXON

AMARILLO, TEXAS

NO ROOM AT THE INN

*Whatever happened to the
NO VACANCY sign?*

.....

Historic Route 66 enters Amarillo, Texas, from the northeast, on a strip lined with seedy motels and fast-food restaurants. This is Route 66 in its older-Elvis phase, bloated and decadent and festooned with baubles. Photos of areas like this always accompany newspaper articles about the horrors of unmanaged development, and a drive down this stretch is a good antidote for syrupy nostalgia over the pre-interstate era.

Most visitors to Amarillo these days arrive on Interstate 40, which skirts the southern edge of the city center and has numerous exits that slough drivers onto mysterious and vexing frontage roads. These are the natural habitat of the chain motel, and La Quinta, Travelodge, Fairfield Inn, and Econolodge all offer accommodations here.

Students of the commercial landscape could drive along both routes and notice any number of things about the evolution of American travel—how the independent motel has entered a late stage of eclipse; how motel architecture has changed from low-slung L-shaped structures to bland multi-story boxes clad in stuccolike panels. But on a recent drive around Amarillo here's what I noticed: every single motel along old Route 66 had one of those VACANCY/NO VACANCY signs. Not a single one along I-40 did.

This trend isn't peculiar to Amarillo, of course. I first noticed the decline of the NO VACANCY sign about three years ago, during a trip down the East Coast. More precisely, I noticed it late one evening when I needed to find a place to sleep. Over the course of an hour I pulled off the highway and ran in and out of half a dozen chain motels to ask if they had rooms available. None did.

After about four motels I started wondering why the proprietors weren't informing me of room availability from the road, as has traditionally been done. I would even have welcomed that free-floating red-neon NO (without the VACANCY) employed by some older motels when full, although it had always struck me as brusque and a little creepy. But the NO VACANCY sign, even in its abbreviated form, appeared to be edging toward extinction.

You may think this a small matter. Perhaps it is. But, as small matters will do, this one began to fester. I wondered what exactly had happened to these signs. Had the technology somehow been lost? Did they fall victim to a hoteliers' conspiracy? At first I sought an answer by asking front-desk clerks about their lack of NO VACANCY signs. Their responses were rarely helpful. More often than not they'd lean over and peer out the window to confirm that they didn't have such a sign, and then shrug and say they weren't sure why.

So I started calling around to motel historians, e-mailing the question to lists of roadside-architecture aficionados, and writing letters to hospitality corporations. The answer, I was sure, would be simple.

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The early history of the NO VACANCY sign is indistinct at best. "It probably started with a note stuck in the window or taped to a door somewhere, and then became a small sign along the road," says John Jakle, a co-author of *The Motel in America* (1996), which is to roadside accommodations what Gibbon's history is to Rome. "It must have gotten to a point where it evolved into an electrical sign that you could turn on and off at the flip of a switch."

What *is* known is that flicking on the NO became a matter of great pride in the 1940s and 1950s, when motels were cheeky upstarts competing against entrenched downtown hotels. "It was almost a status symbol," says Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., the director of the Historic Preservation Commission in Maine, a state still rich in early tourist courts and motels. "No vacancy. We've made it here. This is a good place."

Unlike the overly cheery Big Boy character, the NO VACANCY sign was never just an eye-catching roadside trifle destined to end up in coffee-table books marketed to those with an appetite for kitsch. It conveyed useful information. A signal trait of the Information Age is that data endlessly proliferates, occupying ever more obscure niches. (Advertising on urinal deodorant cakes comes to mind.) But with the disappearance of the NO VACANCY sign, information has actually become scarcer. How did this happen?

One moderately persuasive theory was advanced by Craig Thom, a computer technician from Illinois who describes himself as someone who "drives around a lot." Responding to an e-mail query, he suggested that the lack of a sign may in fact produce *more* information, at least for somebody. Several years ago a clerk at a Super 8 in Missouri told him that the manager wanted potential customers to present themselves even when rooms were unavailable, so that the front desk could track demand, presumably to gauge the need for expansion. "They are sacrificing customer convenience for their data, which doesn't make me happy," Thom wrote.

Someone else suggested that I look into the early history of Holiday Inn. Kemmons Wilson, of Tennessee,

founded the chain in 1952 and served as the (self-proclaimed) Nation's Innkeeper until 1979, when he stepped aside. Wilson is now eighty-eight and heads up a chain of regional motels based in Memphis. I phoned him to see what he could tell me about the NO VACANCY sign.

"Now, isn't that an interesting question," Wilson said in a honeysuckle drawl. "Because that was the first thing I ever said: We'll *never* use a NO VACANCY sign." Wilson recalled early road trips across the Southeast, driving with his family down highways ablaze with NO signs. He remembered thinking that these signs were the height of foolishness, a missed opportunity to aid travelers in need. "Here you had a chance

and fuzzy feeling about Holiday Inns."

Although the beginning of the end of the NO VACANCY era may well have come half a century ago, I can't see that Wilson's reasoning explains the sign's absence today. No front-desk clerk at a fully occupied motel has ever offered to help me find a room, and "warm and fuzzy" experiences in today's service economy are about as common as free road maps at gas stations.

Next I posed my question in letters to various motel chains. Most ignored my inquiry, although three responded with the sort of your-business-is-important-to-us form letters that can induce a coma if read all the way through. Then I got a call from Liz Wilber, at Six Continents, the British corporation that bought Holiday Inn in 1990. She told me that I was not the first to have written about the matter—in fact, the company had received one other letter. She explained that travelers today make and cancel reservations constantly, and room availability fluctuates almost minute to minute. "They'd be flipping the signs on and off all day," she reported, almost mournfully.

I suspect that this isn't an indication of



to help two people—someone with a room to sell and someone looking to buy a room," he told me. From the start he forbade his franchisees from using NO VACANCY signs; the gloriously ro-coco Great Sign for which Holiday Inn was to become famous permitted short greetings to local customers ("Happy 50th Rick and Gladys—Kiwani's Tues 7 pm") but was never used to broadcast room availability.

Jefferson Rogers, who is also a co-author of *The Motel in America*, worked the front desk of a Holiday Inn in New Mexico in the 1980s. He confirmed Wilson's account. "We were told, okay, you may be full, but you can find them a better property in town," he told me. "They would then have a warm

adventurousness or spontaneity, however, but just the reverse—a reflection of travelers' tendencies to provide for virtually any contingency, leaving nothing to chance and endlessly fine-tuning their trips. "There's been a change in the way people travel," Jefferson Rogers told me. "People don't just pull off the road to look for a place to stay, or shoot off on vacation. There's a lot of planning now."

Having learned my lesson three years ago, I've modernized my room-finding tactics. In Amarillo I did what I usually do now in an unfamiliar city—I tracked down a booklet of motel discount coupons and then located a reasonably quiet pay phone and started calling around, giving preference to places with

toll-free numbers. It's a relatively efficient method that yields satisfactory results, although it doesn't feel very Kerouac-esque. Working the pay phone, I could still hear the call of the open road—but I could swear it was fainter than it once had been. —WAYNE CURTIS

BANTRY, IRELAND

REVERBERATIONS OF THE IRISH BOOM

Prosperity and its discontents come to Ireland's towns and countryside

.....

The Irish economy, as has been reported everywhere, has become the marvel of the Western world. With economic growth over the past decade of nearly 50 percent, Ireland enjoys a level of prosperity greater than that of England, its former landlord. As the economist Paul Sweeney writes in *The Celtic Tiger* (1998), the causes are various (and variously viewed). They include investment in the Irish Republic by multinational corporations; funds from the European Union; the communications revolution, which ended Ireland's isolation; fiscal reform; and the increased participation of women in the economy.

Most of the journalistic coverage of the boom has concentrated on Dublin and on a few other cities, including Cork and Limerick. But what has the boom done for, and to, the rest of Ireland? To look into the matter, I recently visited Bantry, a snug locality of 8,000 in the southwest corner of the republic. In the nineteenth century English and American travelers regularly described the place as rife with squalor, poverty, and drunkenness. In the twentieth century Bantry had a brush with the oil business: in 1967 Gulf Oil built a storage terminal on Whiddy Island, just offshore, but the facility was damaged by fire in 1979 and reopened only recently. Tucked in at the head of a vast and peaceful anchorage, behind a statue of Saint Brendan the Navigator, Bantry today looks freshly painted and satisfied with itself. Like most Irish towns, it strikes an American eye as being deliciously free of commercial display. It's a town without cosmopolitan pretension.

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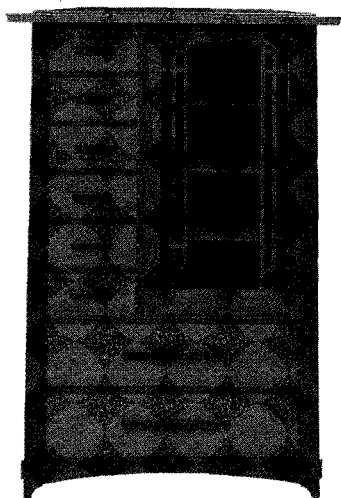
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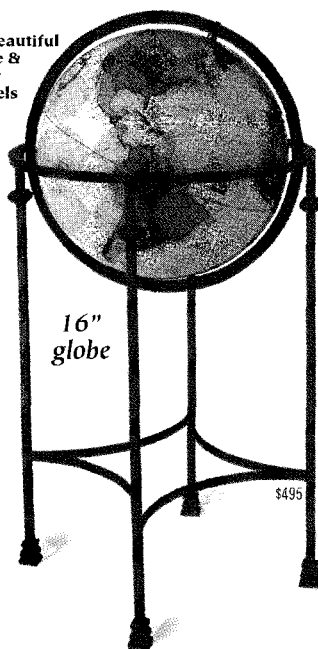


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Everyone in Ireland talks about the reforms in education, which took place in the 1960s. I made inquiries at the local national (public) school, St. Goban's College, which in 1965 had only sixty-four students. Today, housed in a handsome new building, St. Goban's educates 350 boys and girls, aged twelve to eighteen, in such required subjects as geography, history, Irish, French, and hard science, including computer science. Eighty percent of the students qualify for one of the country's many technical institutes or seven universities, to pursue careers in, say, dentistry or pharmacy or the information sector.

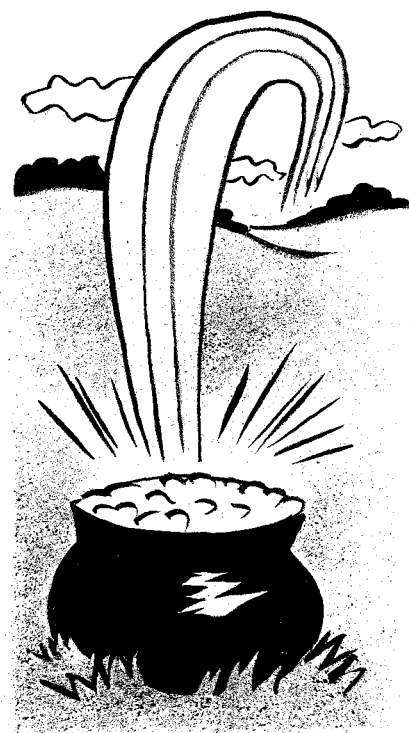
In the old days those Bantry children who failed to qualify for higher education were likely to emigrate and hope for better things in the New World. Now, finding jobs easily in construction, hairdressing, and other trades, they stay in the area, often forming unmarried partnerships and dwelling in homes of their own, separate from their parents. Concrete-block houses are sprouting on every roadside.

Farming in Bantry, as in much of Ireland, has shifted its emphasis and even its look. Neilie O'Leary, a handsome, shaggy forty-nine-year-old, owns a flock of 500 sheep and half a dozen well-trained sheepdogs on his high hillside farm, but he keeps fewer and fewer cows. The dairy business, he told me, is dying out. "The only way for farming here is part-time," he said. "Prosperity has taken people away from the rural." O'Leary's wife, Anne, for example, chooses to work in the Bantry post office rather than having to milk twice a day, like some farmers' wives. His lambs currently sell on the European market instead of domestically or in England—and they are heftier animals now. The EU will subsidize half the cost of a big Suffolk ram to encourage Irish farmers to breed for French slaughterhouses, which like their lambs very large.

Change threatens traditional Bantry farming from other directions as well. The demand for lumber has encouraged entrepreneurs from Ireland and the Continent to plant tree farms. The EU subsidizes their ventures, and the national government, aiming to double

the forested area in Ireland, offers tax incentives. Wealthy Germans and Dutch, eager to buy vacation homes on the hilly greenswards above Bantry Bay, also drive up the price of farmland, and more and more farmers, especially the bachelors, are selling.

Europeans come as tourists, too, to stay at the Sea View House Hotel or the Westlodge Hotel and to tramp over the lovely hills on trails marked a decade or so ago under an arrangement between the government and area farmers. The walks were laid out by unemployed workers on public salary, but those workers have full-time jobs now;



no new trails are under way. The farmers, moreover, are involved in a dispute with the national government, because the European Union has balked at compensating them for the foot traffic across the highlands, and they expect the government to pay.

European money, which has helped to build not only schools but also many other public amenities, has brought nothing but good to Connie Connolly, one of twelve plumbers in the district. Five years ago, he told me, there was enough work in Bantry for only one, but construction and upgrading have brought all the Irish plumbers back from abroad. Connolly clearly welcomes

the prosperity but seems dubious about the potential side effects. He worries about Ireland's becoming "a green island governed by Europeans." He prophesied darkly, "There will be payback to Europe, in my estimate."

Nearly everyone I interviewed had mixed feelings about the new prosperity, but all agreed that the district needs more manufacturing. To see what was already there, I visited Bantry Bay Seafoods, in its two-year-old EU-subsidized processing plant. I parked in a bayside lot and entered the lobby, to be greeted by a tank of guppies and a vivacious red-haired receptionist in flowing green garments. Workers wearing blue smocks and white surgical caps bustled about. So did middle managers who wore neckties and spoke of work in Singapore and Chicago while making preparations for the visit of an Italian delegation. The company's managing director, Denis O'Driscoll, received me in his corner office upstairs and handed me an assortment of gleaming literature. Beginning ten years ago as an aquaculture business (the blue plastic buoys of mussel farms bob all over the bay), Bantry Bay Seafoods now processes and ships shellfish products to supermarkets throughout Europe and will soon be exporting frozen dinners of mussels in garlic butter and a variety of other pasta-with-seafood meals to U.S. companies such as Trader Joe's and Price Chopper. Annual sales have reached about \$11 million, and O'Driscoll oversees 120 workers. He is already having trouble finding Irish help. He had just hired a dozen workers from Latvia and was expecting fifteen more soon.

The Sea View House Hotel, the fanciest of the tourist establishments along the bay, is experiencing a similar difficulty. During the 2001 season it had to hire a number of Polish employees. And the fishing boats of nearby Castletownbere have had to send as far as Newfoundland (where allowable catches have been cut in order to conserve fish stocks) to fill out their crews. All over Ireland this global swapping is going on. In 1999 Ireland imported 6,000 workers from countries outside the European Union; last year it imported 18,000. This year it will bring in as many

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as 32,000, principally for low-paying service jobs in fast-food chains and hotels. Are the people of Ireland, accustomed to sending their own workers to England and America, going to behave any better now than the Germans did after hiring Turks to build roads for Munich and Frankfurt?

These conflicting pressures were all working on voters in Bantry and elsewhere when, on June 8, Ireland held a referendum on whether it should subscribe to the Treaty of Nice, a complex and dimly understood document, already endorsed by most EU members, that would allow a dozen new Union members, all east of Germany. Although both

the Irish government and the Catholic Church lobbied for the treaty, only a third of the electorate turned out, and 54 percent of those voted no. It was an unexpected jolt for the government. Now it's up against conflicting deadlines: it faces a national election by next summer, yet it has only until the end of 2002 to ratify the treaty. The Irish electorate is conscious of a debt to the European Union. But, as Neilie O'Leary told me after the treaty vote, "We were being asked to vote on something we didn't understand. I'm all for the European Union, but where will our development money go? To Eastern Europe? The larger the cake, the smaller the slice." —PETER DAVISON

CICERO, ILLINOIS

WHAT'S PAST IS PRESENT

A town long linked to organized crime and racism fails a recent exercise in image rehabilitation

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Cicero, a working-class Chicago suburb of narrow streets and small brick bungalows, has the feel of a town stuck in the 1950s, which is not entirely unintentional. Indeed, Betty Loren-Maltese, the town's president since 1993, said recently, "I want things how they used to be." Cicero, which was until this past decade an enclave for Lithuanians, Italians, and Czechs, has for a long time lived in a kind of bubble, wary of outsiders, protective of what it has—or, more precisely, what it had.

Most associate the town with Al Capone, who ran his operations from here and who in 1924 commandeered the local election with a brutal show of force. It's an association that irritates townspeople, especially because it's always the first thing the media have to say about the place (this dispatch further proving that dictum). In 1952 Cicero considered changing its name, because, according to the town's lawyer, "People everywhere think we're just a bunch of hoods. A kid from Cicero can't get into a college fraternity." As recently as 1993 the town, still hoping to divert reporters from the Capone link, raised banners calling itself the "Original birthplace of Ernest Hemingway." (Hem-

ingway actually hailed from nearby Oak Park—which in 1899 was technically a part of Cicero.) Defensiveness about Capone is understandable, and yet over the years town leaders have retained connections to the mob—or at least to what's left of it. Betty Loren-Maltese was married to a bookmaker for the syndicate. Her husband, Frank Maltese, who was also the town assessor, died before he could be sent to prison. So the anti-Capone sentiment seems misplaced, not least because the other reason for Cicero's notoriety is, by most measures, even more embarrassing.

Cicero long had a policy of no blacks allowed, as strongly adhered to as anything in the Jim Crow South. For years the town was among the most adept in the nation at keeping out African-Americans. Old-time Lithuanians and Italians I've spoken with have told me that when they were kids, if a black person passed through town they'd run him out, at the behest of the police. In 1951 the governor of Illinois had to call in the National Guard when a mob threw rocks and chunks of metal into the second-floor apartment of a black bus driver and his family, who had just moved in. With town cops looking on, the mob eventually

stormed the apartment and pushed the family's piano through a brick wall. In 1967 Martin Luther King Jr., who was leading his open-housing campaign in Chicago, rescinded his threat to march in Cicero after county officials told him they couldn't guarantee his safety there. King referred to the town as the Selma of the North.

With this dark history in mind I sat in on a recent civil trial that pitted a former police chief, David Niebur, and his deputy, Phillip Bue, against the town and its president. Despite its rather narrow legal implications (Niebur and Bue argued that they'd been wrongfully fired), this case offers an unusually intimate window onto this infamous community as its old guard struggles to preserve its way of life and to keep outsiders at bay.

Loren-Maltese personifies Cicero. She affects a look that harks back to the 1950s, making her perhaps the most easily recognizable politician in the state. A full-figured woman, she wears her black hair in a pompadour and applies thick black mascara and lengthy eyelashes. She is highly quotable (when she agrees to talk to the press), and also highly combustible—which is why her handlers often keep her away from reporters. A local columnist once wrote, "She's a headline." Loren-Maltese named the town's public-safety building after her late husband, a convicted felon. When the Ku Klux Klan announced plans to march through town, she raised \$10,000 to pay them to cancel the rally. (She also offered to have town employees distribute Klan literature.) She responded to street gangs in Cicero with heavy-handed—illegal, according to the American Civil Liberties Union—tactics, which included impounding the cars of suspected gang members. Although Loren-Maltese is often a source of amusement for outsiders, her political skills shouldn't be underestimated. Over the past decade Cicero's ethnic character has changed dramatically. Hispanics moved in, slowly at first, and then in large numbers; according to a recent census, the town is now three-quarters Latino. ("Well, they're not black," one resident told

me, explaining the lack of resistance to Hispanics.) And although this might suggest that Loren-Maltese's political base has eroded, she has been re-elected twice, most recently last April, when she defeated a Hispanic opponent by a two-to-one margin. She has included Hispanics in her administration, but her shrewdest move—or so it seemed at the time—was to hire an out-of-towner to reform the police department, which many Hispanics felt treated them unfairly.

In December of 1997 Niebur, a square-jawed and silver-haired thirty-five-year police veteran who was then the chief of police in Joplin, Missouri, became Cicero's police chief. Niebur, who is now fifty-eight, is a crime-history buff, so when he was first approached about the job, by an outside agency, he told the inquirer, "You've got to be stark raving mad." But then he got to thinking what a challenge Cicero would be—and with its population of 85,616, it was a larger community than Joplin. Moreover, Loren-Maltese personally assured Niebur that she wanted corruption in the department cleaned up. For a town long wary of outsiders, it seemed like an odd appointment, but Loren-Maltese believed it was the only way to rein in her police department.

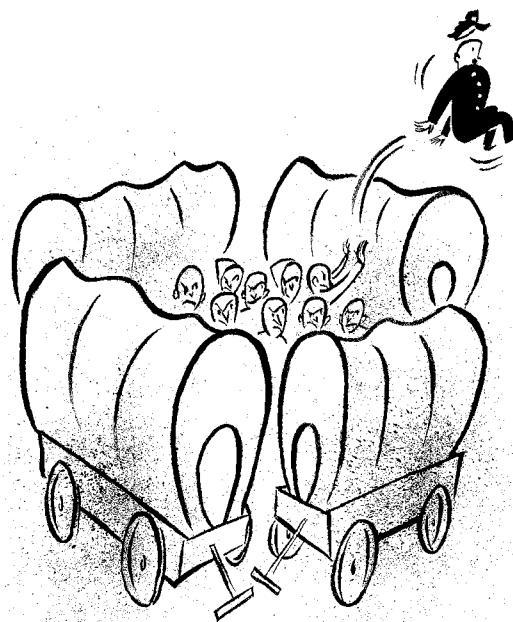
Even before Niebur arrived, agents from the FBI were in touch with him. They suspected Cicero police officers of shaking down illegal immigrants, among other things. And Niebur soon learned that the anti-gang unit was arresting young Hispanics who were loitering on street corners. "There was an unchecked war on the Hispanic community," Niebur told me. So one of the first things he did was require forty-five of his officers to take Spanish lessons. And he suspended or fired some officers he suspected of illicit activity.

Niebur also confronted organized crime. In a sting operation he confiscated video-poker machines from allegedly mob-connected taverns and put them

in a secured room. A few days later someone with a key entered the room, unlocked the machines, and made off with thousands of dollars.

All through this Loren-Maltese publicly praised Niebur. At one point she told a local reporter, "The new chief has literally turned the morale of the department around. There is a different atmosphere, a new beginning of sorts."

And then came his undoing. A couple of months into his stay Niebur began receiving complaints from residents about the town's unusually aggressive towing policy. The town tows roughly 18,000 vehicles a year; by comparison, the suburb of Evanston, which has nearly the same population



as Cicero, tows a quarter of that number. Shortly before Niebur's arrival Cicero had awarded its sole towing contract—a lucrative deal at \$500 a tow—to a newly incorporated company that Niebur began to suspect had ties to town officials. Then Bue, another out-of-towner, who was hired shortly after Niebur, caught one of the towing firm's owners riffling through the police department's towing records. The FBI soon subpoenaed Niebur and Bue to testify before a grand jury. Niebur turned the documents over to the state police and notified the FBI. Assisting the feds, the ultimate outsiders, didn't go down well with Cicero's old guard. Niebur testified that

the town's attorney had said to him, "You're not cooperating with those fuck'n assholes, are you?" A few days later Loren-Maltese fired Niebur and Bue, publicly calling Niebur "stupid" and a "nitwit." When Niebur's belongings were sent to him after he returned to Joplin, among them was a gift from his nephew—a figurine of a police officer holding the hand of a lost boy. The head of the police officer had been twisted off and laid neatly in the Styrofoam packing.

Loren-Maltese made two appearances at the two-week trial, last May. On the second occasion she wore an electric-purple pantsuit. She testified that she had fired Niebur for mismanagement and because he had essentially disbanded the anti-gang unit. Loren-Maltese quickly assumed control of the proceedings from the witness stand and began sparring with Niebur and Bue's attorney. "Why do you only want the part of the answer that you think suits you?" she shot back at one point. The judge later chastised Loren-Maltese for a "really offensive" performance.

In the end the jury awarded Niebur and Bue \$1.7 million, a judgment that Loren-Maltese and the town are appealing. But this saga is hardly over. In a town that has for decades tried to insulate itself from the world, the walls are finally crumbling. In June, not even a month after the verdict in Niebur and Bue's case, the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois announced the indictment of Loren-Maltese, along with nine others, for allegedly looting Cicero of more than \$10 million, funneling it through a mob-run insurance brokerage company. If convicted, Loren-Maltese faces up to forty-eight years in prison. The trial is scheduled for May.

One would think that this news, along with losing to Niebur and Bue, might quiet Loren-Maltese, but during her first public appearance after her arrest (she was presiding over a town-hall meeting), when confronted by a longtime critic, she snapped, "Why don't you shut up and let the people speak!" An elderly woman then rose and brought Loren-Maltese to tears by praising her for all she'd done for Cicero. —ALEX KOTLOWITZ

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In 1972 Roy Allison, who had just stepped down as Vice President and Chief Acoustic Engineer of A.R. (Acoustic Research) after having created the most lauded loudspeakers of his generation, began extensive research into room surfaces to determine how changes in loudspeaker design could produce the greatest fidelity, clarity and imagery possible. Not content with speakers that tested right in an anechoic chamber, Mr. Allison wanted to build speakers that would reproduce recordings in the kind of rooms people live in. Mr. Allison studied the effects of corners, ceiling height, room dimensions, windows, furniture and even people, on the sound produced by various loudspeaker designs.

Two years later, predicated on that research, Allison Acoustics® was born. For the next fifteen years, Roy Allison's company produced what critics called the best loudspeakers in the world. Today, many of those loudspeakers are still in service to owners who say they would never part with them. A loyal, incredibly devoted following has surrounded the work of Roy Allison and his legendary speakers such as the Allison One, Allison Two, Allison Three, Allison Four and Allison CD-9.

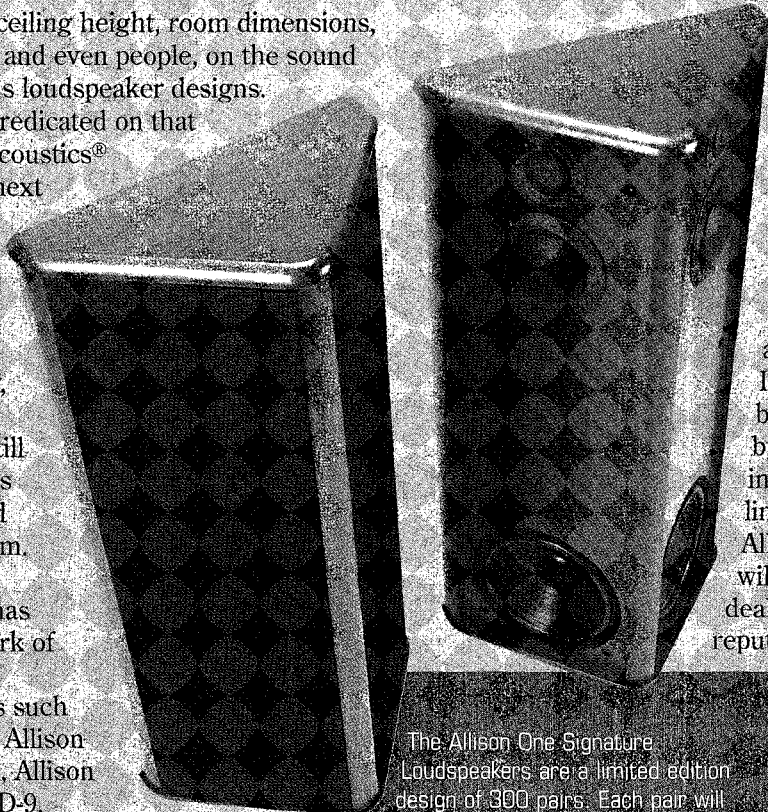
Last year a group of audiophiles, business people and sound engineers came together in Danville, Kentucky, just south of Lexington, to purchase the assets of Mr. Allison's original company. They wanted to reproduce the audio excellence that had been the stock-in-trade of Allison Acoustics.

The group quickly realized that their job of recreating that amazing clarity and imagery would be a great deal easier if Roy himself were part of the effort. A search was begun and Roy Allison was located, living in West Palm Beach, Florida in relative obscurity.

Coaxed out of retirement, Roy agreed to once again take the role of Chief Acoustic Engineer. The 55,000 square foot Allison® factory in Danville is now humming with the production of Roy Allison's patented loudspeakers. The first group of Allison One speakers is now ready for distribution to fine quality audio dealers everywhere. They have the same dual tweeters, dual mid-ranges and dual 10" woofers each as the original Allison Ones as updated by Mr. Allison in the 1980's to accommodate the

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The Allison One Signature Loudspeakers are a limited edition design of 300 pairs. Each pair will be signed and numbered by Roy Allison - the most respected name in sound quality.

A handwritten signature of Roy Allison in dark ink.

THE CRASH OF EGYPTAIR 990

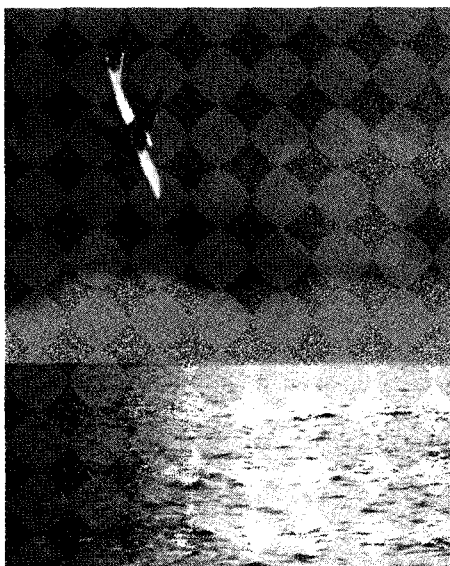
Two years afterward the U.S. and Egyptian governments are still quarreling over the cause—a clash that grows out of cultural division, not factual uncertainty. A look at the flight data from a pilot's perspective, with the help of simulations of the accident, points to what the Egyptians must already know: the crash was caused not by any mechanical failure but by a pilot's intentional act

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

Illustrations by Marc Yankus

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I remember first hearing about the accident early in the morning after the airplane went down. It was October 31, 1999, Halloween morning. I was in my office when a fellow pilot, a former flying companion, phoned with the news: It was EgyptAir Flight 990, a giant twin-engine Boeing 767 on the way from New York to Cairo, with 217 people aboard. It had taken off from Kennedy Airport in the middle of the night, climbed to 33,000 feet, and flown normally for half an hour before mysteriously plummeting into the Atlantic Ocean sixty miles south of Nantucket. Rumor had it that the crew had said nothing to air-traffic control, that the flight had simply dropped off the New York radar screens. Soon afterward an outbound Air France flight had swung over the area, and had reported no fires in sight—only a dim and empty ocean far below. It was remotely possible that Flight 990 was still in the air somewhere, diverting toward a safe landing. But sometime around daybreak a Merchant Marine training ship spotted debris floating on the waves—aluminum scraps, cushions and clothing, some human remains. The midshipmen on board gagged from the stench of jet fuel—a planeload of unburned kerosene rising from shattered tanks on the ocean floor, about 250 feet below. By the time rescue ships and helicopters arrived, it was obvious that there would be no survivors. I remember reacting to the news with regret for the dead, followed by a thought for the complexity of the investigation that now lay ahead. This accident had the markings of a tough case. The problem was not so much the scale of the carnage—a terrible consequence of the 767's size—but, rather, the



still-sketchy profile of the upset that preceded it, this bewildering fall out of the sky on a calm night, without explanation, during an utterly un-critical phase of the flight.

I don't fly the 767, or any other airliner. In fact, I no longer fly for a living. But I know through long experience with flight that such machines are usually docile, and that steering them does not require the steady nerves and quick reflexes that passengers may imagine. Indeed, as we saw on September 11, steering them may not even require much in the way of training—the merest student-pilot level is probably enough. It's not hard to understand why. Airplanes at their core are very simple devices—winged things that belong in the air. They are designed to be flyable, and they are. Specifically, the 767 has ordinary mechanical and hydraulic flight controls that provide the pilot with smooth and conventional responses; it is normally operated on autopilot, but can easily be flown by hand; if you remove your hands from the controls entirely, the airplane sails on as before, until it perhaps wanders a bit, dips a wing, and starts into a gentle descent; if you pull the nose up or push it down (within reason) and then fold your arms, the airplane returns unassisted to steady flight; if you idle the engines, or shut them off entirely, the airplane becomes a rather well behaved glider. It has excellent forward visibility, through big windshields. It has a minimalist cockpit that may look complicated to the untrained eye but is a masterpiece of clean design. It can easily be managed by the standard two-person crew, or even by one pilot alone. The biggest problem in flying the airplane on a routine basis is boredom. Settled into the

deep sky at 33,000 feet, above the weather and far from any obstacle, the 767 simply makes very few demands.

Not that it's idiot-proof, or necessarily always benign. As with any fast and heavy airplane, operating a 767 safely even under ordinary circumstances requires anticipation, mental clarity, and a practical understanding of the various systems. Furthermore, when circumstances are *not* ordinary—for example, during an engine failure just after takeoff or an encounter with unexpected wind shear during an approach to landing—a wilder side to the airplane's personality suddenly emerges. Maintaining control then requires firm action and sometimes a strong arm. There's nothing surprising about this: all airplanes misbehave on occasion, and have to be disciplined. "Kicking the dog," I called it in the ornery old cargo crates I flew when I was in college—it was a regular part of survival. In the cockpits of modern jets it is rarely necessary. Nonetheless, when trouble occurs in a machine as massive and aerodynamically slick as the 767, if it is not quickly suppressed the consequences can blossom out of control. During a full-blown upset like that experienced by the Egyptian crew, the airplane may dive so far past its tested limits that it exceeds the very scale of known engineering data—falling off the graphs as well as out of the sky. Afterward the profile can possibly be reconstructed mathematically by aerodynamicists and their like, but it cannot be even approximated by pilots in flight if they expect to come home alive.

I got a feel for the 767's dangerous side last summer, after following the accident's trail from Washington, D.C., to Cairo to the airplane's birthplace, in Seattle, where Boeing engineers let me fly a specially rigged 767 simulator through a series of relevant upsets and recoveries along with some sobering replays of Flight 990's final moments. These simulations had been flown by investigators more than a year before and had been reported on in detail in the publicly released files. Boeing's argument was not that the 767 is a flawless design but, more narrowly, that none of the imaginable failures of its flight-control systems could explain the known facts of this accident.

But that's getting ahead of the story. Back on October 31, 1999, with the first news of the crash, it was hard to imagine any form of pilot error that could have condemned the airplane to such a sustained and precipitous dive. What switch could the crew have thrown, what lever? Nothing came to mind. And why had they perished so silently, without a single distress call on the radio? A total electrical failure was very unlikely, and would not explain the loss of control. A fire would have given them time to talk. One thing was certain: the pilots were either extremely busy or

incapacitated from the start. Of course there was always the possibility of a terrorist attack—a simple if frightening solution. But otherwise something had gone terribly wrong with the airplane itself, and that could be just as bad. There are more than 800 Boeing 767s in the world's airline fleet, and they account for more transatlantic flights than all other airplanes combined. They are also very similar in design to the smaller and equally numerous Boeing 757s. So there was plenty of reason for alarm.

"EGYPTAIR NINE-NINETY, RADIO CONTACT LOST"

One of the world's really important divides lies between nations that react well to accidents and nations that do not. This is as true for a confined and technical event like the crash of a single flight as it is for political or military disasters. The first requirement is a matter of national will, and never a sure thing: it is the intention to get the story right, wherever the blame may lie. The second requirement follows immediately upon the first, and is probably easier to achieve: it is the need for people in the aftermath to maintain even tempers and open minds. The

path they follow may not be simple, but it can provide for at least the possibility of effective resolutions.

In the case of EgyptAir Flight 990 the only information available at first was external. The airplane had arrived in New York late on a flight from Los Angeles,

**"It got politicized *immediately*,"
an Egyptian journalist explained.
"And this became an official line:
You are out there to prove that
EgyptAir is not responsible."**

and had paused to refuel, take on passengers, and swap crews. Because of the scheduled duration of the flight to Cairo, two cockpit crews had been assigned to the ocean crossing—an "active crew," including the aircraft commander, to handle the first and last hours of the flight; and a "cruise crew," whose role was essentially to monitor the autopilot during the long, sleepy mid-Atlantic stretch. Just before midnight these four pilots rode out to the airport on a shuttle bus from Manhattan's Pennsylvania Hotel, a large establishment where EgyptAir retained rooms for the use of its personnel. The pilots had been there for several days and, as usual, were well rested. Also in the bus was one of the most senior of EgyptAir's captains, the company's chief 767 pilot, who was not scheduled to fly but would be "dead-heading" home to Cairo. An EgyptAir dispatcher rode out on the bus with them, and subsequently reported that the crew members looked and sounded normal. At the airport he gave them a standard briefing and an update on the New York surface weather, which was stagnant under a low, thin overcast, with light winds and thickening haze.

Flight 990 pushed back from the gate and taxied toward the active runway at 1:12 A.M. Because there was little

other traffic at the airport, communications with the control tower were noticeably relaxed. At 1:20 Flight 990 lifted off. It topped the clouds at 1,000 feet and turned out over the ocean toward a half moon rising above the horizon. The airplane was identified and tracked by air-traffic-control radar as it climbed through the various New York departure sectors and entered the larger airspace belonging to the en-route controllers of New York Center; its transponder target and data block moved steadily across the controllers' computer-generated displays, and its radio transmissions sounded perhaps a little awkward, but routine. At 1:44 it leveled off at the assigned 33,000 feet.

The en-route controller working the flight was a woman named Ann Brennan, a private pilot with eight years on the job. She had the swagger of a good controller, a real pro. Later she characterized the air traffic that night as slow, which it was—during the critical hour she had handled only three other flights. The offshore military-exercise zones, known as warning areas, were inactive. The sky was sleeping.

At 1:47 Brennan said, "EgyptAir Nine-ninety, change to my frequency one-two-five-point-niner-two."

EgyptAir acknowledged the request with a friendly "Good day," and after a pause checked in on the new frequency: "New York, EgyptAir Nine-nine-zero heavy, good morning."

Brennan answered, "EgyptAir Nine-ninety, roger."

That was the last exchange. Brennan noticed that the flight still had about fifteen minutes to go before leaving her sector. Wearing her headset, she stood up and walked six feet away to sort some paperwork. A few minutes later she approved a request by Washington Center to steer an Air France 747 through a corner of her airspace. She chatted for a while with her supervisor, a man named Ray Redhead. In total she spent maybe six minutes away from her station, a reasonable interval on such a night. It was just unlucky that while her back was turned Flight 990 went down.

A computer captured what she would have seen—a strangely abstract death no more dramatic than a video game. About two minutes after the final radio call, at 1:49:53 in the morning, the radar swept across EgyptAir's transponder at 33,000 feet. Afterward, at successive twelve-second intervals, the radar read 31,500, 25,400, and 18,300 feet—a descent rate so great that the air-traffic-control computers interpreted the information as false, and showed "XXXX" for the altitude on Brennan's display. With the next sweep the radar lost the transponder entirely, and picked up only an unenhanced "primary" blip, a return from the airplane's metal mass. The surprise is that the radar continued to receive such returns (which show only location, and not altitude) for nearly another minute and a half, indicating that the dive must have dramatically slowed or stopped, and that the 767 remained airborne, however tenuously, during that interval. A minute and a half is a long time. As the Boeing simulations later showed, it must have been a strange and dreamlike period for the pilots,

hurtling through the night with no chance of awakening.

When radar contact was lost, the display for EgyptAir 990 began to "coast," indicating that the computers could no longer find a correlation between the stored flight plan and the radar view of the sky. When Brennan noticed, she stayed cool. She said, "EgyptAir Nine-ninety, radar contact lost, recycle transponder, squawk one-seven-one-two." EgyptAir did not answer, so she tried again at unhurried intervals over the following ten minutes. She advised Ray Redhead of the problem, and he passed the word along. She called an air-defense radar facility, and other air-traffic-control centers as far away as Canada, to see if by any chance someone was in contact with the flight. She asked a Lufthansa crew to try transmitting to EgyptAir from up high. Eventually she brought in Air France for the overflight. The prognosis was of course increasingly grim, but she maintained her professional calm. She continued to handle normal operations in her sector while simultaneously setting the search-and-rescue forces in motion. Half an hour into the process, when a controller at Boston Center called and asked, "Any luck with the EgyptAir?" she answered simply, "No."

GOVERNMENT LITE MEETS GOVERNMENT HEAVY

Among the dead were 100 Americans, eighty-nine Egyptians (including thirty-three army officers), twenty-two Canadians, and a few people of other nationalities. As the news of the disaster spread, hundreds of frantic friends and relatives gathered at the airports in Los Angeles, New York, and Cairo. EgyptAir officials struggled to meet people's needs—which were largely, of course, for the sort of information that no one yet had. Most of the bodies remained in and around the wreckage at the bottom of the sea. Decisions now had to be made, and fast, about the recovery operation and the related problem of an investigation. Because the airplane had crashed in international waters, Egypt had the right to lead the show. Realistically, though, it did not have the resources to salvage a heavy airplane in waters 250 feet deep and 5,000 miles away.

The solution was obvious, and it came in the form of a call to the White House from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, an experienced military pilot with close ties to EgyptAir, requesting that the investigation be taken over by the U.S. government. The White House in turn called Jim Hall, the chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, an investigative agency with a merited reputation for competence. Hall, a Tennessee lawyer and friend of the Cores, had in the aftermath of the TWA Flight 800 explosion parlayed his position into one of considerable visibility. The Egyptians produced a letter formally signing over the investigation to the United States, an option accorded under international convention, which would place them in

a greatly diminished role (as “accredited representatives”) but would also save them trouble and money. Mubarak is said to have regretted the move ever since.

In retrospect it seems inevitable that the two sides would have trouble getting along. The NTSB is a puritanical construct, a small federal agency without regulatory power whose sole purpose is to investigate accidents and issue safety recommendations that might add to the public discourse. Established in 1967 as an “independent” unit of the Washington bureaucracy, and shielded by design from the political currents of that city, the agency represents the most progressive American thinking on the role and character of good government. On call twenty-four hours a day, with technical teams ready to travel at a moment’s notice, it operates on an annual baseline budget of merely \$62 million or so, and employs only about 420 people, most of whom work at the headquarters on four floors of Washington’s bright and modern Loews L’Enfant Plaza Hotel. In part because the NTSB seems so lean, and in part because by its very definition it advocates for the “right” causes, it receives almost universally positive press coverage. The NTSB is technocratic. It is clean. It is Government Lite.

EgyptAir, in contrast, is Government Heavy—a state-owned airline with about 600 pilots and a mixed fleet of about forty Boeings and Airbuses that serves more than eighty destinations worldwide and employs 22,000 people. It operates out of dusty Stalinist-style office buildings at the Cairo airport, under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport, from which it is often practically indistinguishable. It is probably a safe airline, but passengers dislike it for its delays and shoddy service. They call it Air Misère, probably a play on the airline’s former name, Misr Air (“Misr” is Arabic for “Egypt”). It has been treated as a fiefdom for years by Mubarak’s old and unassailable air-force friends, and particularly by the company’s chairman, a man named Mohamed Fahim Rayan, who fights off all attempts at reform or privatization. This is hardly a secret. In parliamentary testimony six months before the crash of Flight 990, Rayan said, “My market is like a water pond which I developed over the years. It is quite unreasonable for alien people to come and seek to catch fish in my pond.” His critics answer that the pond is stagnant and stinks of corruption—but this, too, is nothing new. The greatest pyramids in Egypt are made not of stone but of people: they are the vast bureaucracies that constitute society’s core, and they function not necessarily to get the “job” done but to reward the personal loyalty of those at the bottom to those at the top. Once you understand that, much of the rest begins to make sense. The bureaucracies serve mostly to shelter their workers and give them something like a decent life. They also help to define Cairo. It is a great capital city, as worldly as Washington, D.C., and culturally very far away.

An official delegation traveled from Cairo to the United States and ended up staying for more than a year. It was led

by two EgyptAir pilots, Mohsen al-Missiry, an experienced accident investigator on temporary assignment to the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority for this case, and Shaker Kelada, who had retired from active flying to become a flight-operations manager and eventually vice-president for safety and quality assurance. These men were smart and tough, and managed a team primarily of EgyptAir engineers, many of whom were very sharp.

The U.S. Navy was given the job of salvage, and it in turn hired a contractor named Oceaneering, which arrived with a ship and grapples and remote-controlled submarines. The debris was plotted by sonar, and found to lie in two clusters: the small “west field,” which included the left engine; and, 1,200 feet beyond it in the direction of flight, the “east field,” where most of the airplane lay. From what was known of the radar profile and from the tight concentration of the debris, it began to seem unlikely that an in-flight explosion was to blame. The NTSB said nothing. Nine days after the accident the flight-data recorder—the “black box” that records flight and systems data—was retrieved and sent to the NTSB laboratory in Washington. The NTSB stated tersely that there was preliminary evidence that the initial dive may have been a “controlled descent.” Five days later, on Sunday, November 14, a senior official at the Egyptian Transportation Ministry—an air-force general and a former EgyptAir pilot—held a news conference in Cairo and, with Rayan at his side, announced that the evidence from the flight-data recorder had been inconclusive but the dive could be explained only by a bomb in the cockpit or in the lavatory directly behind it. It was an odd assertion to make, but of little importance, because the second black box, the cockpit voice recorder, had been salvaged the night before and was sent on Sunday to the NTSB. The tape was cleaned and processed, and a small group that included a translator (who was not Egyptian) gathered in a listening room at L’Enfant Plaza to hear it through.

“I RELY ON GOD”

Listening to cockpit recordings is a tough and voyeuristic duty, restricted to the principal investigators and people with specific knowledge of the airplane or the pilots, who might help to prepare an accurate transcript. Experienced investigators grow accustomed to the job, but I talked to several who had heard the EgyptAir tape, and they admitted that they had been taken aback. Black boxes are such pitiless, unblinking devices. When the information they contained from Flight 990 was combined with the radar profile and the first, sketchy information on the crew, this was the story it seemed to tell:

The flight lasted thirty-one minutes. During the departure from New York it was captained, as required, by the aircraft commander, a portly senior pilot named Ahmad al-Habashi, fifty-seven, who had flown thirty-six years for the

airline. Habashi of course sat in the left seat. In the right seat was the most junior member of the crew, a thirty-six-year-old co-pilot who was progressing well in his career and looking forward to getting married. Before takeoff the co-pilot advised the flight attendants by saying, in Arabic, "In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Cabin crew takeoff position." This was not unusual.

After takeoff the autopilot did the flying. Habashi and the co-pilot kept watch, talked to air-traffic control, and gossiped about their work. The cockpit door was unlocked, which was fairly standard on EgyptAir flights. Various flight attendants came in and left; for a while the chief pilot, the man who was deadheading back to Cairo, stopped by the cockpit to chat. Then, twenty minutes into the flight, the "cruise" co-pilot, Cameel al-Batouti, arrived. Batouti was a big, friendly guy with a reputation for telling jokes and enjoying life. Three months short of sixty, and mandatory retirement, he was unusually old for a co-pilot. He had joined the airline in his mid-forties, after a career as a flight instructor for the air force, and had rejected several opportunities for command. His lack of ambition was odd but not unheard of: his English was poor and might have given him trouble on the necessary exams; moreover, as the company's senior 767 co-pilot, he made adequate money and had his pick of long-distance flights. Now he used his seniority to urge the junior co-pilot to cede the right seat ahead of the scheduled crew change. When the junior man resisted, Batouti said, "You mean you're not going to get up? You will get up. Go and get some rest and come back." The junior co-pilot stayed in his seat a bit longer and then left the cockpit. Batouti took the seat and buckled in.

Batouti was married and had five children. Four of them were grown and doing well. His fifth child was a girl, age ten, who was sick with lupus but responding to treatment that he had arranged for her to receive in Los Angeles. Batouti had a nice house in Cairo. He had a vacation house on the beach. He did not drink heavily. He was moderately religious. He had his retirement planned. He had acquired an automobile tire in New Jersey the day before, and was bringing it home in the cargo hold. He had also picked up some free samples of Viagra, to distribute as gifts.

Captain Habashi was more religious, and was known to pray sometimes in the cockpit. He and Batouti were old friends. Using Batouti's nickname, he said, in Arabic, "How are you, Jimmy?" They groused to each other about the chief pilot and about a clique of young and arrogant "kids," junior EgyptAir pilots who were likewise catching a ride

back to the Cairo base. One of those pilots came into the cockpit dressed in street clothes. Habashi said, "What's with you? Why did you get all dressed in red like that?" Presumably the man then left. Batouti had a meal. A female flight attendant came in and offered more. Batouti said pleasantly, "No, thank you, it was marvelous." She took his tray.

At 1:47 A.M. the last calls came in from air-traffic control, from Ann Brennan, far off in the night at her display. Captain Habashi handled the calls. He said, "New York, EgyptAir Nine-nine-zero heavy, good morning," and she answered with her final "EgyptAir Nine-ninety, roger."

At 1:48 Batouti found the junior co-pilot's pen and handed it across to Habashi. He said, "Look, here's the new first officer's pen. Give it to him, please. God spare you." He added, "To make sure it doesn't get lost."

Habashi said, "Excuse me, Jimmy, while I take a quick trip to the toilet." He ran his electric seat back with a whir.

There was the sound of the cockpit door moving.

Batouti said, "Go ahead, please."

Habashi said, "Before it gets crowded. While they are eating. And I'll be back to you."

Again the cockpit door moved. There was a *clunk*. There was a *clink*. It seems that Batouti was now alone in the cockpit. The 767 was at 33,000 feet, cruising peacefully eastward at .79 Mach.

At 1:48:30 a strange, wordlike sound was uttered, three syllables with emphasis on the second, perhaps more English than Arabic, and variously heard on the tape as "control it," "hydraulic," or something unintelligible. The NTSB ran extensive speech and sound-spectrum studies on it, and was never able to assign it conclusively to Batouti or to anyone else. But what is clear is that Batouti then softly said, "*Tawakkalt ala Allah*," which proved difficult to translate, and was at first rendered incorrectly, but essentially means "I rely on God." An electric seat whirled. The autopilot disengaged, and the airplane sailed on as before for another four seconds. Again Batouti said, "I rely on God." Then two things happened almost simultaneously, according to the flight-data recorder: the throttles in the cockpit moved back fast to minimum idle, and a second later, back at the tail, the airplane's massive elevators (the pitch-control surfaces) dropped to a three-degrees-down position. When the elevators drop, the tail goes up; and when the tail goes up, the nose points down. Apparently Batouti had chopped the power and pushed the control yoke forward.

The effect was dramatic. The airplane began to dive steeply, dropping its nose so quickly that the environment



Batouti

inside plunged to nearly zero gs, the weightless condition of space. Six times in quick succession Batouti repeated, "I rely on God." His tone was calm. There was a loud thump. As the nose continued to pitch downward, the airplane went into the negative-g range, nudging loose objects against the ceiling. The elevators moved even farther down. Batouti said, "I rely on God."

Somehow, in the midst of this, now sixteen seconds into the dive, Captain Habashi made his way back from the toilet. He yelled, "What's happening? What's happening?"

Batouti said, "I rely on God."

The wind outside was roaring. The airplane was dropping through 30,800 feet, and accelerating beyond its maximum operating speed of .86 Mach. In the cockpit the altimeters were spinning like cartoon clocks. Warning horns were sounding, warning lights were flashing—low oil pressure on the left engine, and then on the right. The master alarm went off, a loud high-to-low warble.

For the last time Batouti said, "I rely on God."

Again Habashi shouted, "What's happening?" By then he must have reached the left control yoke. The negative gs ended as he countered the pitch-over, slowing the rate at which the nose was dropping. But the 767 was still angled down steeply, 40 degrees below the horizon, and it was accelerating. The rate of descent hit 39,000 feet a minute.

"What's happening, Cameel? What's happening?"

Habashi was clearly pulling very hard on his control yoke, trying desperately to raise the nose. Even so, thirty seconds into the dive, at 22,200 feet, the airplane hit the speed of sound, at which it was certainly not meant to fly. Many things happened in quick succession in the cockpit. Batouti reached over and shut off the fuel, killing both engines. Habashi screamed, "What is this? What is this? Did you shut the engines?" The throttles were pushed full forward—for no obvious reason, since the engines were dead. The speed-brake handle was then pulled, deploying drag devices on the wings.

At the same time, there was an unusual occurrence back at the tail: the right-side and left-side elevators, which normally move together to control the airplane's pitch, began to "split," or move in opposite directions. Specifically: the elevator on the right remained down, while the left-side elevator moved up to a healthy recovery position. That this could happen at all was the result of a design feature meant to allow either pilot to overpower a mechanical jam and control the airplane with only one elevator. The details are complex, but the essence in this case seemed to be that

the right elevator was being pushed down by Batouti while the left elevator was being pulled up by the captain. The NTSB concluded that a "force fight" had broken out in the cockpit.

Words were failing Habashi. He yelled, "Get away in the engines!" And then, incredulously, "... shut the engines!"

Batouti said calmly, "It's shut."

Habashi did not have time to make sense of the happenings. He probably did not have time to get into his seat and slide it forward. He must have been standing in the cockpit, leaning over the seatback and hauling on the controls. The commotion was horrendous. He was reacting instinctively as a pilot, yelling, "Pull!" and then, "Pull with me! Pull with me! Pull with me!"

It was the last instant captured by the on-board flight recorders. The elevators were split, with the one on the right side, Batouti's side, still pushed into a nose-down position. The ailerons on both wings had assumed a strange upswept position, normally never seen on an airplane. The 767 was at 16,416 feet, doing 527 miles an hour, and pulling a moderately heavy 2.4 gs, indicating that the nose, though still below the horizon, was rising fast, and that Habashi's efforts on the left side were having an effect. A belated recovery was under way. At that point, because the engines had been cut, all nonessential electrical devices were lost, blacking out not only the recorders, which rely on primary power, but also most of the instrument displays and lights. The pilots were left to the darkness of the sky,

whether to work together or to fight. I've often wondered what happened between those two men during the 114 seconds that remained of their lives. We'll never know. Radar reconstruction showed that the 767 recovered from the dive at 16,000 feet and, like a great wounded glider, soared steeply back to 24,000 feet, turned to the southeast while beginning to break apart, and shed its useless left engine and some of its skin before giving up for good and diving to its death at high speed.

CONFLICTING REALITIES

When this evidence emerged at the NTSB, the American investigators were shocked but also relieved by the obvious conclusion. There was no bomb here. Despite initial fears, there was nothing wrong with the airplane. The apparent cause was pilot error at its extreme: Batouti had gone haywire. Every detail that emerged from the two flight recorders fit that scenario: the sequence of the switches and controls that were moved, the



responses of the airplane, and the words that were spoken, however cryptic and incomplete. Batouti had waited to be alone in the cockpit, and had intentionally pushed the airplane to its death. He had even fought the captain's valiant attempt at recovery. Why? Professionally, the NTSB didn't need to care. It was up to the criminal investigators at the FBI to discover if this was a political act, or the result of a plot. Even at the time, just weeks after the airplane went down, it was hard to imagine that Batouti had any terrorist connections, and indeed, the FBI never found any such evidence. But in pure aviation terms it didn't really matter why Batouti did it, and pure aviation is what the NTSB is all about. So this was easy—Crash Investigation 101. The guy to blame was dead. The NTSB wouldn't have to go after Boeing—a necessary task on occasion, but never a pleasant prospect. The wreckage, which was still being pulled out of the ocean, would not require tedious inspection. The report could be written quickly and filed away, and the NTSB could move on to the backlog of work that might actually affect the future safety of the flying public.

When Jim Hall, the NTSB chairman, held a news conference to address the initial findings, on November 19, 1999, he was culturally sensitive, responsible, and very strict about the need to maintain an open mind. There had been leaks to the press about the content of the cockpit voice recorder. It was being said that Batouti's behavior had been strange during the dive and that he had recited Muslim prayers. Hall scolded the assembled reporters for using unofficial information and exciting the public's emotions. He made a show of being careful with his own choice of words. He said that the accident "might, and I emphasize *might*, be the result of a deliberate act." He did not say "suicide" or "Arab" or "Muslim." He did not even say "Batouti." He said, "No one wants to get to the bottom of this mystery quicker than those investigating this accident, both here and in Egypt, but we won't get there on a road paved with leaks, supposition, speculation, and spin. That road does not lead to the truth, and the truth is what both the American people and the Egyptian people seek." It was standard stuff, a prelude to a quick wrapping up of the investigation. The Egyptian delegation, which had moved into rooms at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, might have felt grateful to have such a man at the NTSB to guide them through these difficult times. Instead the Egyptians were outraged.

At the NTSB this came as a surprise. Looking back, it's possible to see signs of a disconnect, especially the Egyptian government's baffling speculation about a bomb in the forward lavatory; but just the day before Hall's press conference the Egyptian ambassador had heaped praise on the NTSB and the investigation. Now, suddenly and with startling vigor, the Egyptian delegation went on the offensive. The leader of the charge, Shaker Kelada, later told me about running across one of the American investigators in

the halls of the NTSB. When the investigator mentioned with satisfaction that the work might wrap up within a few weeks, Kelada brought him up short with the news that he'd better change his plans—because far from being over, the investigation had hardly begun.

First the Egyptians had to prepare the ground: the delegation started to loudly criticize the performance and intentions of Boeing, the FBI, and the entire NTSB. Kelada said that Batouti was the scapegoat, and that this was happening because it was an *Egyptian* airliner that had gone down. It did not escape Kelada's attention that the legendary head of aviation investigations at the NTSB—a brilliant and abrasive engineer named Bernard Loeb, who was overseeing the Flight 990 inquiry—was Jewish and something of a Zionist.

Loeb retired last spring; Kelada implied to me last summer that this was a deception, and that Loeb continued to pull the strings. Loeb laughed when I mentioned it to him afterward. He was looking forward to spending time with his grandchildren. But at the same time, he was angry that Egypt, after receiving \$1.3 billion in American assistance every year, would have used any of its budget to cause the United States unnecessary expense by prolonging an investigation that for the NTSB alone had so far cost \$17 million. As to Zionism, Loeb did seem bothered by aspects of the Egyptian culture. I got the feeling, though, that his opinion was fresh—that it stemmed from his contacts with EgyptAir, rather than from experiences that had preceded them.

But it didn't really matter who at the NTSB was in charge of the investigation. In faraway Cairo, inevitably, it was seen as unfair. From the day that Flight 990's recorder tape was transcribed and word of its contents began to leak out, the feeling in Egypt was that all Arabs were under attack, and that the assault had been planned. More than a year after the crash I met a sharp young reporter in Cairo who continued to seethe about it. He said, "For many Egyptians it was a big example of this business of dictating the reality. What made many people question the authenticity of the U.S. claims was the rush to conclusions ... The rush, the interpretation of a few words, it left no chance. The whole thing seemed to apply within a framework of an American sort of soap opera, one of those movies you make. You know—this is a fanatic, he comes from the Middle East, he utters a few religious words, he brings the plane down." But what if Batouti really had brought the plane down—where did the reporter's reaction leave Egypt? Earlier the reporter had written critically about the corruption at EgyptAir, but he refused even to think critically about it anymore.

The reporter's anger was similar, at least superficially, to the anger that was seething through Shaker Kelada and the rest of the Egyptian delegation in November of 1999. For Jim Hall, Bernard Loeb, and others at the NTSB, the

source of the problem seemed at first to be the media coverage, which was typically overeager. Rumors of suicide had circulated in the press almost since the airplane hit the water, but it was only after the voice recorder was recovered that the reports began to make uninformed reference to Muslim prayers. Three days before Hall's press conference *The Washington Post* ran a headline saying, "PILOT PRAYED, THEN SHUT OFF JET'S AUTOPILOT." Television stations speculated that the "prayer" was the *shahada* ("There is no god but God; Muhammad is the messenger of God"), as if this were what one might say before slaughtering infidels. When the actual Arabic words—*Tawakkalt ala Allah*—became public, some news outlets gave the following translation: "I have made my decision. I put my fate in God's hands." This was reported so widely that the NTSB took the unusual step of announcing that "I have made my decision" had never been spoken. By implication, "I place my fate ..." had.

When NTSB investigators explained their lack of control over the American press, the Egyptians scoffed and pointed out—correctly—that the reporters' sources were people inside the investigation. And anyway, the Egyptians added, what Batouti had said was not

"I put my fate in God's hands"—as the NTSB's interpreter had claimed—but, rather, "I rely on God." The investigators blinked at the subtlety of this distinction, and made the necessary changes to the transcript. Then the Egyptians pro-

duced a letter from an Islamic scholar in Cairo who certified that the meaning of *Tawakkalt ala Allah* is "I depend in my daily affairs on the omnipotent Allah alone." The Egyptians wanted the letter inserted into the record, but were willing to allow "I rely on God" to remain in the transcript. Again, the investigators blinked. This was not the sort of thing they normally dealt with. They tried sometimes to bridge the gap as they might have with Americans, with a nudge and a smile, but it got them nowhere.

In essence the Egyptians were making two intertwined arguments: first, that it was culturally impossible for Batouti to have done what the NTSB believed; second, that the NTSB lacked the cultural sensitivity to understand what was on the cockpit voice recorder. With those arguments as a starting point, the Egyptians tore into the complexities of the evidence, disputing any assumptions or conclusions the NTSB put forward and raising new questions at every possible turn—a process that continues to this day. They were tenacious. For example (and this is just a small sample of the Egyptians' arguments): When Batouti said "*Tawakkalt ala Allah*," he was not preparing to die but responding in surprise to something wrong with the flight. He said it qui-

etly, yes, but with emotion that the Americans lacked the cultural sensitivity to hear. When he started the dive, he was trying to avoid a plane or a missile outside. If not that, then the airplane went into the dive on its own. When he idled the engines, it was to keep from gaining speed. When he cut the engines, he was going through the required restart procedure, because he erroneously believed—on the basis of the low-oil-pressure warning light that flashed in the cockpit—that the engines had flamed out. Apparently Habashi made the same mistake, which is why he discussed engine cuts. When Habashi called "Pull with me!," Batouti did exactly that. The split elevators were like the upswept ailerons—either an aerodynamic anomaly, resulting from the unknown pressures of ultra-high-speed flight on the 767, or, more simply, an error in the flight-data recorder. Whichever way, the Egyptians argued that expensive wind-tunnel testing was necessary at high Mach numbers near the speed of sound.

Meanwhile, most of the wreckage had been recovered and spread out in a hangar in Rhode Island. A second salvage operation was mounted in the spring to coincide with a state visit by Mubarak to Washington. It went to

the west debris field and brought up the left engine and a boatload of worthless scraps. At the NTSB a story circulated about Al Gore, who was said to have angered Mubarak by making a casual reference to "the suicide flight." There was a short flap about that. The

After listening to the recording, an Egyptian investigator came out of the room looking badly shaken, and made it clear he knew that Batouti had done something wrong.

investigation continued. The documentation grew. The possibilities multiplied and ran off in a hundred directions. An airline pilot observing the scene said to me, "It could have been this, it could have been that. Bottom line is, it could have been anything except their guy."

THE SEARCH FOR A MOTIVE

While the Egyptians were proposing theory after theory to absolve Batouti, the FBI was conducting a criminal investigation, collecting evidence that provided for his possible motive. Mostly through interviews with employees of the Pennsylvania Hotel, the FBI found that Batouti had a reputation for sexual impropriety—and not merely by the prudish standards of America. It was reported that on multiple occasions over the previous two years he had been suspected of exposing himself to teenage girls, masturbating in public, following female guests to their rooms, and listening at their doors. Some of the maids, it was said, were afraid of him, and the hotel security guards had once brought him in for questioning and a warning. Apparently the hotel had considered banning him. The FBI learned that EgyptAir was aware of

these problems and had warned Batouti to control his behavior. He was not considered to be a dangerous man—and certainly he was more sad than bad. In fact, there was a good side to Batouti that came out in these interviews as well. He was very human. Many people were fond of him, even at the hotel.

But a story soon surfaced that an altercation may have occurred during the New York layover before the fatal departure. The FBI was told that there had been trouble, and possibly an argument with the chief pilot, who was also staying at the hotel. It was hypothesized that the chief pilot might have threatened disciplinary action upon arrival back in Cairo—despite the public humiliation that would entail. Was that perhaps Batouti's motive? Did the killing of 217 people result from a simple act of vengeance against one man? The evidence was shaky at best. Then, in February of 2000, an EgyptAir pilot named Hamdi Hanafi Taha, forty-nine, landed in England and requested political asylum, claiming that he had information on the accident. FBI and NTSB investigators flew immediately to interview him, hoping that he would provide the answers they needed. They were disappointed. Taha told a story that seemed to confirm that Batouti had been confronted by the chief pilot, and he added some new details, but he turned out to be an informant of questionable utility—a radical Muslim who, along with others in the ranks of EgyptAir pilots, had forced the airline to ban the serving of alcohol, and who now went on at length about corruption at EgyptAir, and also what he claimed was rampant alcoholism and drug use among his secular peers. The request for asylum was itself a little flaky. The American investigators flew home without solid information. Most of this came out in the press when the story of Batouti's sexual improprieties was leaked, further angering the Egyptians. They countered, eventually producing a Boeing 777 captain named Mohamed Badrawi, who had been with the other pilots in New York on the fateful night, and who testified at length that they were like a band of brothers—that Batouti and the chief pilot got along well and had had no direct confrontations. Rather, Badrawi said, he had acted at times as a “mediator” between the two men, cautioning Batouti on behalf of the chief pilot to “grow up” in order to avoid legal problems in the United States.

With that on the record, assigning a motive to Batouti became all the more difficult. For a variety of reasons, Bernard Loeb thought the FBI was wasting everyone's time. He did not really oppose the search for a motive, but he was against entering such speculative and easily countered discussions into the NTSB's public record. Privately he believed in the story of the fight. But as he later emphasized to me, “We just didn't need to go there.”

Loeb thought the same about much of the investigation. Month after month, as the NTSB chased down the theories that EgyptAir kept proposing, Loeb worried about all the

other projects that were being put aside. He tried to keep a sense of distance from the work, driving from suburban Maryland to his office dressed in a sports jacket and tie, just like any other Washingtonian with a quiet job. But it was a hopeless ambition. Most mornings the Egyptian delegation was there too. Later Loeb said to me, his voice strangled with frustration, “You had to be there! You had to live through this! Day in and day out! It was as if these people would go back to their rooms at night and then identify some kind of reason ... And then it would start all over again. It was insane! It was just insane!”

To bolster their arguments the Egyptians had hired some former accident investigators and also the retired NTSB chairman Carl Vogt, whose willingness to legitimize the Egyptian campaign was seen by many within the NTSB as a betrayal. The Egyptians also turned to the American pilots' union—in principle to improve their communication with the NTSB, but in practice probably just to add weight to their side. In the spring of 2000 the union sent to Washington a man named Jim Walters, a U.S. airline pilot with long experience in accident investigations. Walters thought he could patch things up. Later he said to me, “The Egyptians appeared to be listening to me. But as it turned out, they weren't.” Then he said, “I thought I was there to give them advice...” It was a disappointment. He liked the Egyptians personally, and remained sympathetic to their side even after he left.

I asked him to describe the scene in Washington. He said, “The NTSB isn't terribly tolerant of people who don't follow good investigative procedure. And they weren't used to dealing with a group like this, right in their back yard, with offices in the same building, there *every* day. I thought, The first thing we have to do is calm everybody down. I thought I could explain to the Egyptians, ‘This is how the NTSB operates,’ and explain to Jim Hall, ‘Hey, these guys are Egyptians. You've got to understand who these guys are, and why they're doing things the way they are, and maybe we can all just kiss and make up and get along from here.’”

But it didn't work out that way. Walters was naive. Kiss and make up? The Egyptians no more needed his advice about investigative procedure than they had needed the NTSB's opinions about the nature of a free press.

A small war had broken out between Egypt and the United States on a battlefield called Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. On one side stood Shaker Kelada and his men, fighting for the honor of their nation against the mysterious forces of American hegemony, and specifically against an agency whose famed independence they believed had been compromised. On the other side stood Bernard Loeb and his people, fighting just as hard—but to set a schedule, write the report, and disengage. Jim Hall was scurrying in between. And Boeing was off in Seattle, not quite out of range, trying unsuccessfully to look small.

The irony is that Loeb, too, thought the agency's independence had been compromised, though for the opposite reason: there were meetings at the White House, and phone calls to Jim Hall, in which concern was expressed about accommodating the Egyptian view, and in which it was implied that there should be no rush to finish a report that inevitably would offend Mubarak. Loeb was disgusted and typically vocal about his opinion. When I asked him if the influence was necessarily so wrong, he said, "Next they ask you to *change* the report—to say Batouti didn't do it." He added, however, that no one had ever suggested such a change—and it was a good thing, too.

EGYPT VERSUS THE WEST

By late last May the fight had slowed, and Shaker Kelada was able to spend most of his time back home in Cairo. The NTSB had just issued a draft report, and Egypt was preparing an opposing response. I found Kelada in his expansive new office at the Cairo airport, where we talked several times over the course of a week. These were not good conversations. Kelada insisted on repeating the official Egyptian positions, and would go no further. At one point he began to attack the New York air-traffic controllers, and specifically Ann Brennan, for having walked away from her display. He implied that her absence had a bearing on the accident, or perhaps sparked a subsequent cover-up by the American government. He said, "It was very sloppy air-traffic control, and not what the U.S. wants to show. They're number one at everything, and they don't want *anyone* to know that they have a sloppy operation in New York."

I tried to reach him as one pilot to another. I said, "Come on, I think of that as being a normal operation, don't you?"

He said, "Well, if it is, I don't want to fly in the New York area!"

It was nonsense. And in aviation terms, a lot of what he said to me was equally unconvincing. Eventually I stopped taking notes.

Even when he was being reasonable, the party line kept showing through. He said, "I cannot say it's a mechanical failure. I don't have enough evidence, but I cannot dismiss the possibility of a mechanical failure ... If I want to be careful."

I said, "On the other hand, you *do* have enough evidence to dismiss the human factor?"

And he said, "Yes."

"To dismiss the intentional act?"

"Yes." He paused. He said, "We search for the truth."

It was late in the day. Kelada sat behind his desk—a man in a big office with jets outside, a smart man, a careful man. I thought of the question that had plagued me all along: not whether the Egyptians were right or wrong but whether they really believed their own words. Loeb had said to me, "Do they *believe* it? I believe they believe in fear."

I went downtown, to an old coffeehouse near the Nile, and spent a few hours with Hani Shukrallah, a columnist and one of the more thoughtful observers of the Egyptian scene. Shukrallah is a small, nervous man, and a heavy smoker. He said, "I know that as far as the Egyptian government was concerned, the point that this was *not* pilot error, and that the Egyptian pilot did *not* bring it down—this was decided before the investigation began. It had to do with Egypt's image in the outside world ... The government would have viewed this exactly as it would, for example, an Islamic terrorist act in Luxor—something that we should cover up. So it got politicized *immediately*. And this became an official line: You are out there to prove that EgyptAir is not responsible. It became a national duty. It was us versus the West. And all the history played into it, from Bonaparte's campaign until now." In the minds even of people on the street, Shukrallah said, it became "an all-out war."

FOLLOWING FLIGHT 990'S PATH

If so, the United States was in such a strong position that it could lose the struggle only by defeating itself. This is why from the very start of the difficult process it was all the more important for the NTSB to consider the evidence fairly and keep an open mind. The problem was that so many of the scenarios the Egyptians posited were patently absurd—stray missiles, ghost airplanes, strange weather, and the like. Yet that didn't mean that everything they said was wrong. As long as Batouti's motive could not be conclusively shown, the possibility remained that the dive of Flight 990 was unintentional, just as Kelada maintained. And in the background the Egyptians had some very smart engineers looking into the various theories.

The 767's elevator movements are powered by three redundant hydraulic circuits, driving a total of six control mechanisms called "actuators," which normally operate in unison. Given the various linkages and cross-connections, the system is complex. The Egyptians thought it through and realized that if two of the six actuators were to fail on the same side of the airplane, they would drive both elevators down, forcing the 767 to pitch into a dive that might match the profile that had emerged from EgyptAir 990's flight-data recorder. Furthermore, if such a failure happened and either pilot tried to right it, that could conceivably explain the "splitting" of the elevators that occurred during 990's attempted recovery.

As might be expected, the discussion about dual actuator failures grew complicated. It also grew political. The NTSB had salvaged most of the actuators from the ocean floor and had found no clear evidence of failure, but with perceptions of public safety at stake, the agency asked Boeing for further information. Boeing engineers calculated that a dual actuator failure would not have deflected the elevators far enough down to equal the known elevator

deflections of Flight 990, and that such a failure therefore would not have caused as steep a dive. To explore the question they performed a series of ground tests of a 767 elevator, inducing dual actuator failures and “splits” on a parked airplane in Seattle. After adjusting the measured effects for the theoretical aerodynamic pressures of flight, they found—as they had expected—poor correlation with the known record of Flight 990 elevator positions. They believed in any case that either pilot could quickly have recovered from a dual actuator failure by doing what comes naturally at such moments—pulling back hard on the controls.

The NTSB was satisfied; the Egyptians were not. They poked holes in the conclusions and requested basic and costly aerodynamic research, at speeds well beyond the 767’s limits, toward Mach One. The question was, of course, To what end? But for Boeing this was a delicate thing, because Egypt kept buying expensive airplanes and was influential in the Arab world. A bit of additional research would perhaps be in order.

Meanwhile, the company’s engineers had moved on to flight simulations of the accident, a series of dives set up to be flown in Boeing’s highly programmable 767 engineering simulator—a “fixed cab” without motion, capable of handling extremes. These were the profiles that I flew when I went to Seattle last summer. On that same trip I went to Everett, Washington, where the airplanes are made, and in a cockpit with a company test pilot split the elevators in a powered-up 767, as the Egyptian crew presumably had.

In order to do this we needed to break the connection between the left and right control yokes, which are mechanically joined under the floorboards, and usually move together. He pushed on his, I pulled on mine, and at fifty pounds of pressure between us the controls were suddenly no longer working in tandem. Far behind us, at the tail, the elevators separated smoothly. On a cockpit display we watched each elevator go its own way. The airplane shuddered from the movement of the heavy control surfaces. We played with variations. Toward the end the pilot laughed and said I was compressing his bones.

But when I got to the simulations, they felt too real to be a game. The simulator was a surrogate cockpit already in flight—humming and warm, with all the controls and familiar displays, and a view outside of an indistinct twilight. It was headed east at 33,000 feet and .79 Mach—just as Flight 990 had been. The first set of profiles were “back-driven” duplications of the fatal dive, generated directly from Flight 990’s flight-data recorder. Another Boeing test

pilot sat in Batouti’s seat, and the engineers clustered around behind. I let the simulation run on automatic the first few times, resting one hand on the controls to feel the beast die—the sudden pitch and shockingly fast dive, the clicking of a wildly unwinding altimeter, the warbling alarm, the loss of most displays at the bottom after the engines were gone, and the dark, steep, soaring climb up to 24,000 feet, the control yoke rattling its warning of an aerodynamic stall, the airplane rolling southeast to its end. I watched this several times and then flew the same thing by hand, matching the pressure I put on the control yoke to a specially rigged indicator, which, after the elevators’ split had occurred, allowed me to match the force required to achieve Habashi’s “pull” and Batouti’s “push” as captured by the flight-data recorder. First I stood and flew Habashi’s “Pull with me!” from behind the seat—up to ninety pounds of force, which under those conditions seemed like not very

much. It was the other intention, the pushing, that was dramatic. What was required was not only pushing but then pushing harder. The idea that someone would do that in an airplane full of passengers shocked me as a pilot. If that’s what Batouti did, I will never understand what was going on in his mind.

The second set of simulations were easier to fly. These were the dual actuator failures, which EgyptAir proposed might have overcome Batouti when he was alone in the cockpit. The purpose was to test the difficulty or ease of recovery from such an upset. Again the simulations began at 33,000 feet and .79 Mach. I

flew by hand from the start. The airplane pitched down strongly and without warning. I hauled back on the controls and lost 800 feet. It was an easy recovery, but not fair—I had been ready. The engineers then made me wait before reacting, as they had made other pilots—requiring delays of five, ten, and finally fifteen seconds before I began the recovery. Fifteen seconds seems like an eternity in a 767 going out of control. Even so, by hauling hard on the yoke and throttling back, I managed to pull out after losing only 12,000 feet; and though I went to the maximum allowable dive speed, the airplane survived. This was not unusual. Airplanes are meant to be flown. During the original simulation sessions done for the NTSB every pilot with a dual actuator failure was able to recover, and probably better than I. So what was wrong with Batouti? The simplest explanation is that he was trying to crash the airplane. But if he wasn’t, if the Egyptians were right that he couldn’t recover from a dual actuator failure, what was wrong with him as an aviator?

I posed the question to Jim Walters, the airline pilot



who despite his disappointment remained sympathetic to the Egyptians' position. He had a ready answer. He called Batouti "the world's worst airline pilot."

But how good do you have to be?

Bernard Loeb would have none of it. He said, "Sure. In the end they were willing to sell him down the river. They said, 'He panicked!' Bottom line is, if the actuator drops the nose, you can pull it up. They know that. They *admit* it. Pulling the nose up is the most intuitive, reflexive thing you can do in an airplane. So when you start hearing arguments like that, you *know* people are blowing smoke."

"Look, first we sit through this cockpit voice recording in which ..." He shook his head. "How many cockpit voice recordings have I heard? Hundreds? Thousands? When someone has a problem with an airplane, you know it. One of our investigators used to say to me, 'These damned pilots, they don't tell us what's happening. Why don't they say, 'It's the rudder!'" They don't do that. But I'll tell you what they do say. They make clear as hell that there's something really wrong. 'What the *hell's* going on? What is *that*?' Every single one of them. When there's a control problem of some sort, it is so crystal clear that they are trying desperately to diagnose what is going on. Right to when the recorder quits. They are fighting for their lives.

"But this guy is sitting there saying the same thing in a

slow, measured way, indicating no stress. The captain comes in and asks what's going on, and he doesn't answer! That's what you start with. Now you take the dual actuator failure that doesn't match the flight profile, and is also fully recoverable. Where do you want to go after that?"

The NTSB's final report on Flight 990 was expected for the fall of this year, and it was widely presumed in aviation circles that the report would find no mechanical failure or external cause for the crash. It also seemed likely that the report would at least implicitly blame Batouti for the disaster—a conclusion that would, of course, be unacceptable within Egypt. Nonetheless, by last May, when I met him in Cairo, Shaker Kelada was looking pleased, and I later found out why. His engineers had gotten busy again, and had come up with new concerns—certain combinations of tail-control failures that might require further testing. Now Boeing had come to town for a quiet talk with its customers, and had agreed to do the tests. Boeing was going to inform the NTSB of the new work, and the end would again be delayed.

Sitting in his office, Kelada could not help gloating. He said, "Jim Hall told me, 'I've learned a very good lesson. When you deal with a foreign carrier in an investigation, before you go anywhere with it, you have to study the history and culture of the country.' These were his own words to me! He said, 'I knew nothing about Egypt or its culture before we got into EgyptAir 990.'"

I said, "What would he have learned?"

"Not to underestimate people. To think that he's way up there, and everybody's way down here."

Fair enough. But in the end there was the question of the objective truth—and there was the inclination not to seek real answers for even such a simple event as a single accident nearly two years before.

I knew that at the start of the investigation the Egyptian delegation had included a man named Mamdouh Heshmat, a high official in civil aviation. When the cockpit voice recording first arrived at L'Enfant Plaza, Heshmat was there, and he heard it through with a headset on. According to several investigators who listened alongside him, he came out of the room looking badly shaken, and made it clear he knew that Batouti had done something wrong. He may have called Cairo with that news. The next day he flew home, never to reappear in Washington. When NTSB investigators went to Cairo, they could not find him, though it was said that he was still working for the government. I knew I wouldn't find him either, but I wanted to see how Kelada would react to the mention of him. Kelada and I had come to the end. I said I had heard about a man who had been one of the first to listen to the tape—who could it have been? Kelada looked straight at me and said, "I don't recall his name." There was no reason to continue, from his perspective or mine. ▀

JOHN 6:17

—The disciples out at sea again.

So many complications in the mission.

Five loaves and two small fishes

to feed the sick Tiberian five thousand,

who want to crown this miracle a king.

But Jesus will not suffer them their vanity

and leaves their lonely company to bread.

He finds another mountain: thus the twelve
abandoned, putting out to sea in the generalized
direction of Capernaum, lost without their master.

A storm blows up, the kind that makes of sailors

disciples of us all. Three, four miles,

twenty-five or thirty furlongs,

rowing in a wind that feels like crime.

They know they should have waited at the shore.

Fear, they know, is their faith tested.

Fear of the figure they now see walking toward them.

—STANLEY PLUMLY

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ZION'S VITAL SIGNS

A journey through modern Israel, where terrorism has been a fact of ordinary life for decades—and where ordinary life defeats terrorism

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

Illustrations by Eric Hanson

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Passover is my idea of a perfect holiday. Dear God, when you're handing out plagues of darkness, locusts, hail, boils, flies, lice, frogs, and cattle murrain, and turning the Nile to blood and smiting the firstborn, give me a pass. And tell me when it's over.

The Lord did well by me this Passover—brilliant sunshine on the beaches of Tel Aviv, pellucid waters, no flies in my room at the Hilton, and certainly no lice. I am a first-born myself, but I was not the least smitten, not even by the cute waitress at the Hilton's kosher sushi restaurant. I am a happily married man. And by the way, Leviticus 11:10 says, "Of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you"—an apt description of sushi as far as I'm concerned. But gentiles aren't expected to understand the intricacies of dietary law, although extra complications thereof lead to Passover's main drawback: food and—more important to gentiles—drink.

"I'll have a Scotch," I said to the Hilton's bartender.

"Scotch isn't kosher," he said. "It's made with leaven."

"Gin and tonic," I said.

"Gin isn't kosher."

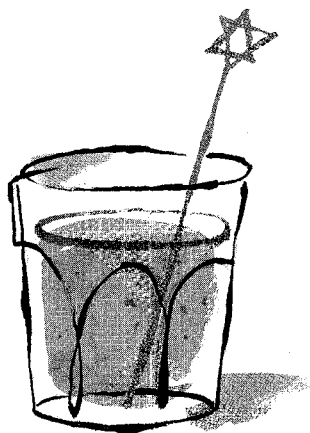
"What can I have?"

"You can have a screwdriver—Israeli vodka and orange juice."

"What's Israeli vodka like?" I asked.

"The orange juice is very good."

There was no plague of tourists in Israel. It should have been a period of hectic visitation, with Passover beginning April 7 and the Eastern Orthodox and Western Easters coinciding a week later. But Israel's income from tourism dropped by 58 percent in the last quarter of 2000, and to judge by the queue-less ticket counters at Ben-Gurion Airport and the empty-seated aisles of El Al, the drop had continued. The marble lobby of the



Hilton echoed, when at all, with the chatter of idle desk clerks and bellhops. The din of strife had rendered Israel quiet.

Quiet without portentous hush—traffic hum, air-conditioning buzz, and cell-phone beeps indicated ordinary life in an ordinary place. Tourism wasn't the only thing there was no sign of in Israel. No demonstrations blocked intersections; public-address systems failed to crackle with imperatives; exigent posters weren't stuck to walls except to advertise raves. There was no sign of crisis, international or bilateral or domestic political,

although all news reports agreed that a crisis raged here, and an economic crisis besides. A 12 percent quarterly decline in gross domestic product was unevident in boarded-up shops and empty cafés, which didn't exist, and beggars and the homeless, who weren't on the streets.

There was no sign of terrorism's effects. The Carmel Market was crowded with people either wholly unafraid or indifferent to whether they were blown up singly or in bunches. If police security was pervasive, it was invisible. Israel, I've heard, is hated fanatically by millions of Muslims around the world, whereas Congress is loathed only by a small number of well-informed people who follow politics closely. But a walk around anything in Israel is less impeded by barriers and armed guards than a walk around the Capitol building in Washington.

There was no sign of war. Plenty of soldiers were to be seen, carrying their weapons, but this is no shock to the frequent traveler. For all that the world looks askance at America's lack of gun control, foreigners love to wave guns around. Nothing about the Israeli Defense Forces is as odd as Italian carabinieri brandishing their machine pistols while grimly patrolling that flash-point Venice.

There was, in fact, no sign of anything in Tel Aviv. In particular there was no sign of Israel's vital strategic importance to world peace—except, of course, those signs of vital strategic importance to world peace one sees everywhere,

the lettering here in Hebrew but the trademark logos recognizable enough.

Tel Aviv is new, built on the sand dunes north of Jaffa in the 1890s, about the same time Miami was founded. The cities bear a resemblance in size, site, climate, and architecture, which ranges from the bland to the fancifully bland. In Miami the striving, somewhat troublesome immigrant population is the result of Russia's meddling with Cuba. In Tel Aviv the striving, somewhat troublesome immigrant population is the result of Russia's meddling with itself. I found a Russian restaurant where they couldn't have cared less what was made with leaven, where they had Scotch, and where, over one Scotch too many, I contemplated the absurdity of Israel's being an ordinary place.

What if people who had been away for ages, out and on their own, suddenly showed up at their old home and decided to move back in? My friends with grown-up children tell me this happens all the time. What if the countless ancient tribal groups that are now defeated, dispersed, and stateless contrived to re-establish themselves in their ancestral lands in such a way as to dominate everyone around them? The Mashantucket Pequots are doing so this minute at their Foxwoods casino, in southeastern Connecticut. What if a religious group sought a homeland never minding how multifarious its religion had become or how divergent its adherents were in principles and practices? A homeland for Protestants would have to satisfy the aspirations of born-again literalists holding forth about creationism in their concrete-block tabernacles and also to fulfill the hopes and dreams of vaguely church-ed latitudinarians praising God's creation by boating on Sundays. Protestant Zion would need to be perfect both for sniping at abortion doctors in North Carolina and for marrying lesbians in Vermont. As an American, I already live in that country.

Maybe there's nothing absurd about Israel. I wandered out into the ordinary nighttime, down Jabotinsky Street, named for the founder of Revisionist Zionism, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who wrote in 1923, "A voluntary agreement between us and the Arabs of Palestine is inconceivable now or in the foreseeable future." Thus Jabotinsky broke with the father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, who, in *Altneuland* (1902), had a fictional future Arab character in a fictional future Israel saying "The Jews have made us prosperous, why should we be angry with them?" And now the Carmel Market was full of goods from Egypt.

From Jabotinsky Street I meandered into Weizmann Street, named for the first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, who in 1919 met with Emir Faisal, the future King of Iraq and a son of the sheriff of Mecca, and concluded an agreement that "all necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale." Faisal sent a letter to the American Zionist

delegates at the Versailles peace conference wishing Jews "a most hearty welcome home."

Turning off Weizmann Street, I got lost for a while among signpost monikers I didn't recognize but that probably commemorated people who became at least as embattled as Jabotinsky, Herzl, Weizmann, and Faisal. I emerged on Ben-Gurion Avenue. The first Prime Minister of Israel was a ferocious battler. He fought the British mandate, the war of liberation, Palestinian guerrillas, and the Sinai campaign. He even won, most of the time, in the Israeli Knesset. And still he was on the lookout for peace. In the months leading up to the Suez crisis, in 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower had a secret emissary shuttling between Jerusalem and Cairo. Egypt's President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, told the emissary (in words that Yasir Arafat could use and, for all I know, does), "If the initiative [Nasser] was now taking in these talks was known in public he would be faced not only with a political problem, but—possibly—with a bullet."

A bullet was what Yitzhak Rabin got, at the end of Ben-Gurion Avenue, from a Jewish extremist, during a peace rally in the square that now bears Rabin's name. A bullet was also what Emir Faisal's brother, King Abdullah of Jordan, got, from a Muslim extremist, for advocating peace with Israel. Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, got a bullet too.

If bullets were the going price for moderation hereabouts, then I needed another drink. I walked west along Gordon Street—named, I hope, for Judah Leib Gordon, the nineteenth-century Russian novelist who wrote in classical Hebrew, and not for Lord George Gordon, the fanatical anti-Catholic and leader of the 1780 Gordon riots, who converted to Judaism late in life and died in Newgate Prison praising the French Revolution. This brought me to a stretch of nightclubs along the beach promenade. Here, two months later, a suicide bomber would kill twenty-one people outside the Dolphi disco. Most of the victims were teenage Russian girls, no doubt very moderate about everything other than clothes, makeup, and the proper selection of dance-mix albums.

My tour guide arrived the next morning. His name was a long collection of aspirates, glottal stops, and gutturals with, like printed Hebrew, no evident vowels. "Americans can never pronounce it," he said. "Just call me T'zchv."

I called him Z. I was Z's only customer. He drove a minibus of the kind that in the United States always seems to be filled with a church group. And so was Z's, until recently. "Most of my clients," he said, "are the fundamentalists. They want to go everywhere in the Bible. But now ..." The people who talk incessantly about Last Days have, owing to violence in the region, quit visiting the place where the world will end.

Z was seventy-five, a retired colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces, a veteran of every war from liberation to

the invasion of Lebanon. "Our worst enemy is CNN," he said. His parents came from Russia in 1908 and settled on the first kibbutz in Palestine. Z was full of anger about the fighting in Israel—the fighting with the ultra-Orthodox Jews. "They don't serve in the army. They don't pay taxes. The government gives them money. I call them Pharisees."

As we walked around, Z would greet by name people of perfectly secular appearance, adding, "you Pharisee, you," or would introduce me to someone in a T-shirt and jeans who had maybe voted for Ariel Sharon in the most recent election by saying, "I want you to meet Moshe, a real Pharisee, this one."

Z said, over and over, "The problem is with the Pharisees." About Arabs I couldn't get him to say much. He seemed to regard Arabs as he did weather. Weather is important. Weather is good. We enjoy weather. We respect weather. Nobody likes to be out in weather when it gets dramatic. "My wife won't let me go to the Palestinian areas," Z said.

"Let's go to an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood," I said.

"You don't want to go there," he said. "They're dumps. You want to see where Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee?"

"No, I don't."

"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea ..." For a man at loggerheads with religious orthodoxy, Z recited a lot of Scripture, albeit mostly from the New Testament, where Pharisees come off looking pretty bad. When quoting he would shift to the trochaic foot—familiar to him, perhaps, from the preaching of his evangelical tourists; familiar to me from my mom's yelling through the screen door, "*You get in here right this minute!*"

As a compromise we went to Jaffa and had Saint Peter's fish from the Sea of Galilee for lunch. Jaffa is the old port city for Jerusalem, a quaint jumble of Arab architecture out of which the Arabs ran or were run (depending on who's writing history) during the war of liberation. Like most quaint jumbles adjacent to quaintness-free cities, Jaffa is full of galleries and studios. Israel is an admirably artsy place. And, as in other artsy places of the modern world, admiration had to be aimed principally at the effort. The output indicated that Israelis should have listened the first time when God said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing." Some of the abstract stuff was good.

I wanted to look at art. Z wanted me to look at the house of Simon the Tanner, on the Jaffa waterfront. This, according to Acts 10:10–15, is where Saint Peter went into a trance and foresaw a universal Christian Church and, also, fitted sheets. Peter had a vision of "a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things." God told Peter to kill them and eat them. Peter thought this didn't look kosher—or, probably,

in the case of the creeping things, appetizing. And God said that what He had cleansed should not be called unclean.

"Then is when Peter knew Christianity was for everyone, not just the Jews!" Z said, with vicarious pride in another religion's generous thought.

A little too generous. To Peter's idea we owe ideology, the notion that the wonderful visions we have involve not only ourselves but the whole world, whether the world wants to get involved or not. Until that moment of Peter's in Jaffa, the killing of heretics and infidels was a local business. Take, for example, the case of John the Baptist: with Herodias, Herod Antipas, and stepdaughter Salome running the store, it was a mom-and-pop operation. But by the middle of the first century theological persecution had gone global in the known world. Eventually the slaughter would outgrow the limited market in religious differences. During our era millions of people have been murdered on purely intellectual grounds.

"Can we go in?" I asked.

"No," Z said. "The Muslims put a mosque in there, which made the Orthodox angry. They rioted, which kept the Christians out. So the police closed the place."

For those who dislike ideology, the great thing about kibbutzim is that they're such a lousy idea. Take an Eastern European intelligentsia and make the desert bloom. One would sooner take Mormons and start a rap label. But Kibbutz Yad-Mordechai, three quarters of a mile north of the Gaza Strip, passed the test of ideology. It worked—something no fully elaborated, universally applied ideology ever does.

I'd never been to a kibbutz. I don't know what I expected—Grossinger's with guns? A bar mitzvah with tractors? Some of my friends went to kibbutzim in the 1960s and came back with tales of sex and socialism. But you could get that at Oberlin, without the circle dancing. I'm sure my poli-sci-major pals were very little help with the avocado crop. Anyway, what I wasn't expecting was a cluster of JFK-era summer cottages with haphazard flower beds, sagging badminton nets, and Big Wheel tricycles on the grass—Lake Missaukee, Michigan, without Lake Missaukee.

A miniature Michigan of shrubbery and trees covered the low hills of the settlement, but with a network of drip-irrigation lines weaving among the stems and trunks. Here were the fiber-optic connections of a previous and more substantive generation of modernists, who meant to treat a troubled world with water rather than information. Scattered in the greenery were the blank metal-sided workshops and warehouses of contemporary agriculture, suggestive more of light industry than of peasanthood. And Yad-Mordechai has light industry, too, producing housewares and decorative ceramics. Plus it has the largest apiary in Israel, an educational center devoted to honey and bees, a gift shop, a kosher restaurant, and, of

all things 1,300 yards from the Gaza Strip, a petting zoo.

Yad-Mordechai was founded in 1943 on an untilled, sandy patch of the Negev. The land was bought from the sheik of a neighboring village. And there, in the common little verb of the preceding sentence, is the moral genius of Zionism. Theodor Herzl, when he set down the design of Zionism in *The Jewish State* (1896), wrote, "The land ... must, of course, be privately acquired." The Zionists intended to buy a nation rather than conquer one. This had never been tried. Albeit various colonists, such as the American ones, had foisted purchase-and-sale agreements on peoples who had no concept of fee-simple tenure or of geography as anything but a free good. But Zionists wanted an honest title search.

More than a hundred years ago the Zionists realized what nobody else has realized yet—nobody but a few cranky Austrian economists and some very rich people skimming the earth in Gulfstream jets. Nothing is zero-sum, not even statehood. Man can make more of everything, including the very thing he sets his feet on, as the fellow getting to his feet and heading to the bar on the GV can tell you. "If we wish to found a State to-day," Herzl wrote, "we shall not do it in the way which would have been the only possible one a thousand years ago."

Whether the early Zionists realized what they'd realized is another matter. Palestinian Arabs realized, very quickly, that along with the purchased polity came politics. In politics, as opposed to reality, everything is zero-sum.

Considering how things are going politically in Zion these days, the foregoing quotation from Herzl should be continued and completed.

Supposing, for example, we were obliged to clear a country of wild beasts, we should not set about the task in the fashion of Europeans of the fifth century. We should not take spear and lance and go out singly in pursuit of bears; we should organise a large and lively hunting party, drive the animals together, and throw a melinite bomb into their midst.

On May 19, 1948, Yad-Mordechai was attacked by an Egyptian armored column with air and artillery support. The kibbutz was guarded by 130 men and women, some of them teenagers, most without military training. They had fifty-five light weapons, one machine gun, and a two-inch mortar. Yad-Mordechai held out for six days—long enough for the Israeli army to secure the coast road to Tel Aviv. Twenty-six of the defenders were killed, and about 300 Egyptians.

A slit trench has been left along the Yad-Mordechai hilltop, with the original fifty-five weapons fastened to boards and preserved with tar. Under the viscous coatings a nineteenth-century British rifle is discernible, and the sink-trap plumbing of two primitive Bren guns. The rest of the firearms look like the birds and cats that were once mummified—by Egyptians, appropriately enough. Below the trench is a lace negligee of barbed wire, all the barbed wire the kibbutz had in 1948, and beyond that are Egyptian tanks, just where they stopped when they could go no farther. Between the tanks dozens of charging Egyptian soldiers are represented by life-size, black-painted two-dimensional cutouts—Gumby commandos, lawn ornaments on attack.

It is the only war memorial I've seen that was frightening and silly—things all war memorials should be. Most war memorials are sad or awful—things, come to think of it, war memorials should also be. And this war memorial has

a price of admission—which, considering the cost of war, is another good idea.

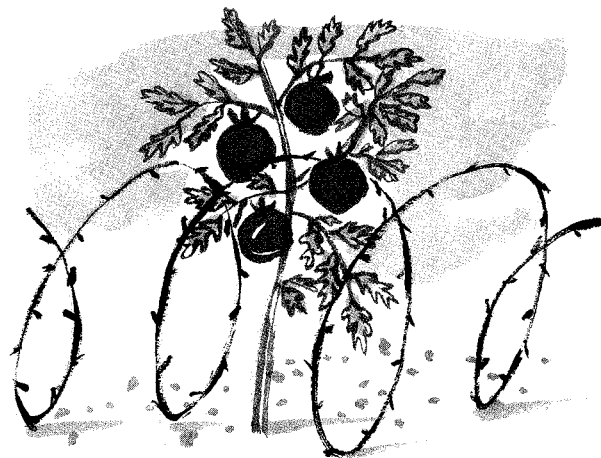
There was a crabby old guy at the ticket booth, whom Z greeted with warm complaining, grouch to grouch. Then Z took me to Yad-Mordechai's Holocaust museum, which skips pity and goes immediately to Jewish resistance during World War II and Jewish fighting in Palestine and Israel. Yad-Mordechai is named for Mor-

dechai Anielewicz, the commander of the Warsaw-ghetto uprising. The message of the Yad-Mordechai museum is that the Holocaust memorial is in the trench at the other end of the kibbutz.

This is the second wonderful thing about Zionism: it was right. Every other "ism" of the modern world has been wrong about the nature of civilized man—Marxism, mesmerism, surrealism, pacifism, existentialism, nudism. But civilized man did want to kill Jews, and was going to do more of it. And Zionism was specific. While other systems of thought blundered around in the universal, looking for general solutions to comprehensive problems, Zionism stuck to its guns, or—in the beginning, anyway—to its hoes, mattocks, and irrigation pipes.

True, Zionism has a utopian-socialist aspect that is thoroughly nutty as far as I'm concerned. But it isn't my concern. No one knocks on my door during dinner and asks me to join a kibbutz or calls me on the weekend to persuade me to drop my current long-distance carrier and make all my phone calls by way of Israel. And given my last name, they won't.

My last name is, coincidentally, similar to the maiden



name of the Holocaust-museum docent, who was Baltimore Irish and had married a young man from the kibbutz and moved there in the 1970s. "I converted," she said, "which the Orthodox make it hard to do, but I went through with it. There's a crabby old guy here who sort of took me under his wing. The first Yom Kippur after I converted, he asked me, 'Did you fast?' I said yes. He said, 'Stupid! You probably saw him on the way in, behind the ticket counter. He's a veteran of the fight for Yad-Mordechai. There's a photo of him here, when they liberated the kibbutz, in November '48." And there was the photo of the young, heroic, crabby old guy. And now he was behind the ticket counter at the war memorial—not making a political career in Jerusalem or writing a book about the young, heroic days or flogging his story to the History Channel.

"How cool is that?" said the Baltimore Irish woman running the Holocaust museum.

Z and I had lunch at the kibbutz's self-serve restaurant, where Z took his plate of meat and sat in the middle of the dairy section. In the sky to the south we could see smoke rising from the Gaza Strip—tires burning at an intifada barricade, or just trash being incinerated. Public services aren't what they might be in the Palestinian Authority at the moment. Or maybe it was one of the Jewish settlements in Gaza being attacked, although we hadn't heard gunfire.

These settlements aren't farms but, mostly, apartment clusters. "Are the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza some kind of post-agricultural, post-industrial, high-rise Zionism?" I asked Z. "Or are they a government-funded, mondo-condo, live-dangerously parody of nation-building?"

"Pharisees!" Z said, and he went back to eating.

After lunch we drove to Ben-Gurion's house in Tel Aviv, a modest, foursquare, utterly unadorned structure. But the inside was cozy with 20,000 books, in Hebrew, English, French, German, Russian, Latin, Spanish, Turkish, and ancient Greek. No fiction, however: a man who devoted his life to making a profound change in society was uninterested in the encyclopedia of society that fiction provides.

Looking at the thick walls and heavy shutters, I wondered if the house had been built to be defended. Then I twigged to the purpose of the design and gained true respect for the courage of the Zionist pioneers. Ben-Gurion came to the Middle East before air conditioning was invented—and from Plonsk, at that.

We spent the next day, at my insistence and to Z's mystification, driving around the most ordinary parts of Israel, which look so ordinary to an American that I'm rendered useless for describing them to other Americans. American highway strip-mall development hasn't quite reached Israel, however, so there's even less of the nondescript to not describe.

Z and I stood in a garden-apartment complex in Ashdod, in the garden part, a patch of trampled grass. "Here is the ugliest living in Israel," he said. We went to a hill on the Ashdod shore, a tell actually, a mound of ancient ruins, an ash heap of history from which we had a view of—ash heaps, and the power plant that goes with them, which supplies half of Israel's electricity. Ashdod, incidentally, is a Philistine place-name, not a pun. We could also see the container port, Israel's principal deep-water harbor. "This is the place where the whale threw Jonah up," Z said.

We went to the best suburbs of Tel Aviv, which look like the second-best suburbs of San Diego. We spent a lot of time stuck in traffic. Violence in the West Bank has forced traffic into bottlenecks on Routes 2 and 4 along the coast, in a pattern familiar to anyone negotiating Washington, D.C.'s Beltway—living in a place where you're scared to go to half of it and the other half you can't get to.

Israel is slightly smaller than New Jersey. Moses in effect led the tribes of Israel out of the District of Columbia, parted Chesapeake Bay near Annapolis, and wandered for forty years in Delaware. From the top of Mt. Nebo, in the equivalent of Pennsylvania, the Lord showed Moses all of Canaan. New Canaan is in Connecticut—but close enough. And there is a Mt. Nebo in Pennsylvania, although it overlooks the Susquehanna rather than the Promised Land of, say, Paramus. Joshua blew the trumpet and the malls of Paramus came tumbling down. Israel also has beaches that are at least as nice as New Jersey's.

An old friend of mine, Dave Garcia, flew in from Hong Kong to spend Easter in Jerusalem. "I like to go places when the tourists aren't there," he said. Dave spent two years in Vietnam before the tourists arrived, as a prisoner of the Viet Cong. "Let's see where the Prince of Peace was born," he said. "It's in the middle of the intifada."

Z took us from Ben-Gurion Airport to the roadblock between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The highway was strewn with broken bottles, as if in the aftermath not of war but of a very bad party. Israeli soldiers and Palestinian Authority policemen stood around warily. Z handed us over to an Arab tour-guide friend of his who drove a twenty-five-year-old Mercedes and looked glum. Israel had lost half its tourism, but hotels in Palestinian areas were reporting occupancy rates of four percent.

The Arab guide parked at random in the middle of empty Manger Square, outside the Church of the Nativity. "There is normally a three-and-a-half-hour wait," he said, as we walked straight into the Manger Grotto. The little cave has been rendered a soot hole by millennia of offertory candles. It's hung with damp-stained tapestries and tarnished lamps and festoons of grimy ornamentation elaborate enough for a Byzantine Emperor if the Byzantine Emperor lived in a basement. I imagine the Virgin Mary

had the place done up more cheerfully, with little homey touches, when it was a barn.

The only other visitors were in a tour group from El Salvador, wearing bright-yellow T-shirts and acting cheerfully pious. Dave asked them in Spanish if, after all that El Salvador had been through with earthquakes and civil war, the fuss about violence and danger around here puzzled them. They shrugged and looked puzzled, but that may have been because no one in the Garcia family has been able to speak Spanish for three generations, including Dave.

According to our tour guide, all the dead babies from the Massacre of the Innocents are conveniently buried one grotto over, under the same church. Sites of Christian devotion around Jerusalem tend to be convenient. In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher the piece of ground where Jesus' cross was erected, the stone where he was laid out for burial, and the tomb in which he was resurrected—plus where Adam's skull was allegedly buried and, according

angry that, according to my guidebook, “in 1984 there were violent clashes as Greek and Armenian clergy fought running battles with staves and chains that had been hidden beneath their robes.” What would Jesus have thought? He might have thought, *Hand me a staff*, per Mark 11:15: “Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers.”

It's left to the Muslims to keep the peace at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, just as it's left to the Jews to keep a similar peace at the likewise divided Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Who will be a Muslim and a Jew to the Muslims and the Jews? Hindus, maybe. That is more or less the idea behind putting UN peacekeeping troops in Israel. This may or may not work. The *Bhagavad Gita* opens with the hero Arjuna trying to be a pacifist: “Woe!” Arjuna says. “We have resolved to commit a great crime as we stand ready to kill family out of greed for king-

ship and pleasures!” But the Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to quit whining and fight. “Either you are killed and will then attain to heaven,” Krishna says, “or you triumph and will enjoy the earth.”

Our guide took us to several large gift stores with no other customers, aisles stacked with unsold souvenirs of Jesus' birth. Part of the Israeli strategy in the intifada has been to put economic pressure on the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza. Fear of death hasn't



to early Christian cartographers, the center of the world—are within a few arthritic steps of one another. Saint Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, was over seventy-five when she traveled to the Holy Land, in 326, looking for sacred locations. Arriving with a full imperial retinue and a deep purse, Saint Helena discovered that her tour guides were able to take her to every place she wanted to go; each turned out to be nearby and, as luck would have it, for sale. The attack of real-estate agents in Palestine long pre-dates Zionism.

The Church of the Nativity is a shabby mess, the result of quarreling religious orders. Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic priests have staked out Nativity turf with the acrimonious precision of teenage brothers sharing a bedroom. A locked steel door prevents direct access from the Roman Catholic chapel to the Grotto of the Nativity, which has to be reached through the Greek Orthodox monastery, where there is a particular “Armenian beam” that Greek Orthodox monks stand on to sweep the area above the Grotto entrance, making the Armenians so

stopped the Arabs. Maybe fear of Chapter 11 will do the trick. The entire hope of peace on earth rests with badly carved olivewood crèche sets. Dave and I bought several.

Then our guide took us up a hill to the Christian Arab village of Beit Jala, which the Israelis had been shelling (and later would occupy). Large chunks were gone from the tall, previously comfortable-looking limestone villas. Shuttered housefronts were full of what looked like bullet holes but were large enough to put a Popsicle in. “Ooh, fifty-caliber,” Dave said with professional appreciation.

“These people,” our guide said, “have no part in the violence.” Dave and I made noises of condolence and agreement in that shift of sympathy to the nearest immediate victim that is the hallmark of modern morality.

“Here a man was sleeping in his bed,” our guide said, showing us a three-story pile of rubble. “And they couldn't find him for days later. The Israelis shell here for no reason.”

“Um,” Dave said, “*why* for no reason?” And our guide, speaking in diplomatic circumlocution, allowed as how every now and then, all the time, Palestinian gunmen would

occasionally, very often, use the Beit Jala hilltop to shoot with rifles at Israeli tanks guarding a highway tunnel in the valley. They did it the next night.

"It's kind of a rule of military tactics," Dave said to me, sotto voce, as we walked back to the car, "not to shoot a rifle at a tank when the tank knows where you are." Unless, of course, scanty olivewood-crèche-set sales are spoiling your enjoyment of earth and you've decided to attain to heaven.

The owner of an upscale antiquities shop back in Bethlehem did not look as if he meant to attain any sooner than necessary, even though his store's air-conditioning unit had been knocked out by Israelis firing on nearby rioters. He arrived in a new Mercedes with three assistants to open his business especially for Dave, his first customer in a month.

The antiquities dealer was another friend of Z's. Z told us that this was the man whose grandfather was the Palestinian cobbler to whom the Dead Sea Scrolls were offered as scrap leather by the Bedouin shepherd who found them—a story too good to subject to the discourtesies of investigative journalism.

The emporium was new, built in the soon-dashed hopes of millennium traffic. The antiquities were displayed in the stark, track-lit modernity necessary to make them look like something other than the pots and pans and jars and bottles of people who had, one way or another, given up on this place long ago.

Dave collects antiques, but by profession he's an iron-and-steel commodities trader. He has also lived in Asia for years. I sat on a pile of rugs and drank little cups of coffee while Levantine bargaining met Oriental dickering and the cold-eyed brokerage of the market floor. The three great world traditions of haggle flowered into confrontation for two and a half hours. Folks from the Oslo talks and the Camp David meetings should have been there for benefit of instruction. Everyone ended up happy. No fatal zero-sum thinking was seen as bank notes and ceramics changed hands at last. Dave could make more money. And the Arabs could make more antiquities.

Why can't everybody just get along? No reasonably detached person goes to Israel without being reduced in philosophical discourse to the level of Rodney King—or, for that matter, to the level of George Santayana. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," Santayana said, in one of those moments of fatuousness that come to even the most detached of philosophers. It goes double for those who can't remember anything else. And they *do* get along, after their fashion. Muslims and Christians and Jews have lived together in the Holy Land for centuries—hating one another's guts, cutting one another's throats, and touching off wars of various magnitudes.

The whole melodrama of the Middle East would be im-

proved if amnesia were as common here as it is in melodramatic plots. I was thinking this as I looked at the Dead Sea Scrolls in the solemn underground Shrine of the Book, inside the vast precincts of the Israel Museum. Maybe all the world's hoary tracts ought to wind up as loafer soles or be auctioned at Sotheby's to a greedy high-tech billionaire for display in his otherwise bookless 4,000-square-foot cyberden. Then I noticed that Z was reading the scrolls, muttering aloud at speed, perusing an ancient text with more ease than I can read Henry James. What's past is past, perhaps, but when it passed, this was where it went.

Z dropped us at the King David Hotel, the headquarters of the Palestinian mandate administration when the British were trying to keep the peace. In 1946 the hotel was blown up by the radical wing of the Jewish Resistance Movement, the Irgun. Some of every group were killed—forty-one Arabs, twenty-eight British, seventeen Jews, and five reasonably detached persons of miscellaneous designation. The Irgun was led by the future Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who would make peace with Egypt in the 1970s but, then again, war with Lebanon in the 1980s.

On the way to the hotel Z explained why there will always be war in the region. "Israel is strategic," he said in his most New Testamental tone. "It is the strategic land bridge between Africa and Asia. For five thousand years there has been fighting in Israel. It is the strategic land bridge." And the fighting continues, a sort of geopolitical muscle memory, as though airplanes and supertankers hadn't been invented. The English and the French might as well be fighting over the beaver-pelt trade in Quebec today, and from what I understand of Canadian politics, they are.

We were meeting Israeli friends of Dave's at the hotel, a married couple. He voted for Sharon; she voted for Ehud Barak. Dave and I marked our lintels and doorposts with the blood of the lamb, metaphorically speaking, and drank Israeli vodka and orange juice.

"There will always be war," the husband said, "because with war Arafat is a hero and without war he's just an unimportant guy in charge of an unimportant place with a lot of political and economic problems."

"There will always be war," the wife said, "because with war Sharon is a hero and without war he's just an unimportant guy in charge of an unimportant place with ..."

Also, war is fun—from a distance. Late the next night Dave and I were walking back to our hotel in Arab East Jerusalem. Dave was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and I was in a blazer and chinos. We couldn't have looked less Israeli if we'd been dressed like Lawrence of Arabia (who, incidentally, was a third party to the cordial meeting between Chaim Weizmann and Emir Faisal). Fifty yards down a side street a couple of Palestinian teenagers jumped out of the

shadows. Using the girly overhand throw of nations that mostly play soccer, one kid threw a bottle at us. It landed forty yards away.

On Good Friday, Dave and Z and I walked from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Lions Gate, where Israeli paratroopers fought their way into the Old City during the Six-Day War. We traveled the Via Dolorosa in an uncrowded quiet that Jesus Christ and those paratroopers were not able to enjoy. We owed our peace in Jerusalem to an enormous police presence. There have always been a lot of policemen in Jerusalem, but they did Jesus no good. Nor did the Jordanian police give Israeli soldiers helpful directions to the Ecce Homo Arch. And our Savior and the heroes of 1967 didn't have a chance to stop along the way and bargain with Arab rug merchants.

Z and the rug merchants exchanged pessimisms, Z grousing about Sharon and the Arabs complaining about Arafat. "The Israeli army tells Arafat where the strikes will come," one shopkeeper said. "They tell him, 'Don't be here. Don't be there.' No one tells me."

I visited the fourteen Stations of the Cross and said my prayers—for peace, of course, although, as a Zionist friend of mine puts it, "Victory would be okay too." Jesus said, "Love your enemies." He didn't say not to have any. In fact, he said, "I came not to send peace but a sword." Or at least staves and chains.

Then we went to the Wailing Wall, the remnant of the Second Temple, built by the same Herod the Great who killed all the babies buried near the manger in Bethlehem. Atop the Wailing Wall stands the Haram ash-Sarif, with the Dome of the Rock enclosing Mt. Moriah, where Abraham was ready to kill Isaac and where, at that moment, Muslims gathered for Friday prayers were surrounded by Israeli soldiers, some of both no doubt ready to kill too. (The Dome of the Rock also marks the center of the world for those who don't believe that the center of the world is down the street, in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.)

In the plaza in front of the Wailing Wall religious volunteers were lending yarmulkes to Jews who had arrived bareheaded. "Well," Dave said, "my mother was Jewish, so I guess that makes me Jewish. I'd better get a rent-a-beanie and go over to the Wailing Wall and ... wail, or something."

The yarmulkes being handed out were, unaccountably, made of silver reflective fabric. "I look like an outer-space Jew," Dave said.

"I always thought you were Catholic," I said.

"Because of *Garcia*," Dave said, "like *O'Rourke*."

"I'm not Catholic either. My mother was Presbyterian, my father was Lutheran, and I'm Methodist. I came home from Methodist confirmation class in a big huff and told my mother there were huge differences between Presbyterians and Lutherans and Methodists. And my mother said, 'We

sent you to the Methodist church because all the nice people in the neighborhood go there.'"

"They could use that church here," Dave said. He swayed in front of the wall, like the Orthodox surrounding him, although, frankly, in a manner more aging-pop-fan than Hasidic.

What could cause more hatred and bloodshed than religion? This is the Israel question. Except it isn't rhetorical; it has an answer. We went to Yad Vashem, the Jerusalem Holocaust Memorial, and saw what the godless get up to.

There are worse things than war, if the intifada is indeed a war. As of this writing, 513 Palestinians and 124 Israelis had been killed in what is called the second intifada. About 40,000 people perished in the 1992–1996 civil war in Tajikistan that nobody's heard of. From one and a half to two million are dead in Sudan. There are parts of the world where the situation Dave and I were in is too ordinary to have a name.

Late Saturday night the particular place where we were in that situation was the American Colony Hotel, in East Jerusalem, sometimes called the PLO Hotel for the supposed connections the staff has. It is the preferred residence of intifada-covering journalists, especially those who are indignant about Israeli behavior. The American Colony Hotel was once the mansion of an Ottoman pasha. Dave and I sat among palms in the peristyle courtyard, surrounded by arabesques carved in Jerusalem's golden limestone. The bedroom-temperature air was scented with Easter lilies, and in the distance, now and then, gunfire could be heard.

"This country is hopeless," Dave said, pouring a Palestinian Taybeh beer to complement a number of Israeli Maccabee beers we'd had earlier in West Jerusalem. "And as hopeless places go, it's not bad." We discussed another Israel question. Why are Israeli girls so fetching in their army uniforms, whereas the women in the U.S. military are less so? It may have something to do with carrying guns all the time. But Freud was a lukewarm Zionist, and let's not think about it.

After the first Zionist Congress, in 1897, the rabbis of Vienna sent a delegation to Palestine on a fact-finding mission. The delegation cabled Vienna saying, "The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another man." However, the twentieth century, with all its Freudianism, was about to dawn, and we know what having the beautiful bride married to another man means in a modern story line. No fair using amnesia as a device for tidy plot resolution.

"Do we have to choose sides?" Dave said. But it's like dating sisters. Better make a decision or head for the Global Village limits. And speaking of sisters, I opened the *Jerusalem Post* on Easter morning and discovered that my sister's neighborhood in Cincinnati was under curfew, overrun with race riots. ■



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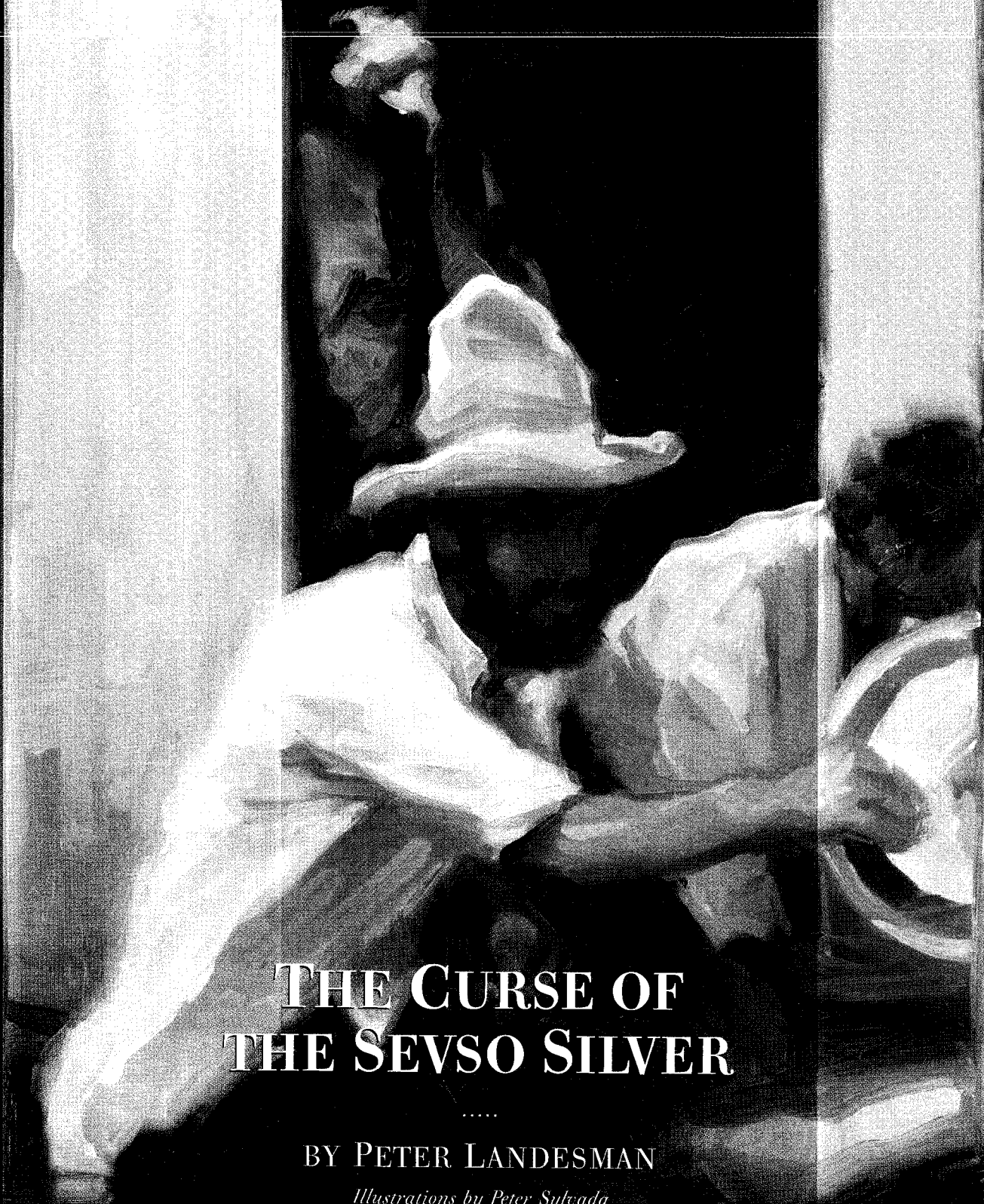
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THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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THE CURSE OF THE SEVSO SILVER

A treasure trove of Roman-era silver, perhaps worth \$200 million as a complete collection, came to light in the late 1970s—most likely discovered by a Hungarian laborer. He had little sense of the value of his find. In the years that followed, efforts to sell the silver have led to a web of plots and counterplots, the close attention of police officials in several European capitals, and, quite possibly, three murders

He lies like an eyewitness. —RUSSIAN PROVERB

I.

The village of Polgardi is a dusty roadside settlement northeast of Lake Balaton, a resort area in western Hungary popular with German tourists. Two thousand years ago Balaton was popular with Romans, a kind of Jersey Shore for the generals who ruled Pannonia, the immense Roman province that encompassed parts of today's Croatia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia, along with parts of Hungary, Romania, and Albania. The region was a hub of the Roman Empire, the site of countless wars, and crisscrossed by trade routes. In the fourth and fifth centuries Goths and Vandals swept down from the north, and the Romans bolted, leaving behind the lavish wreckage of their occupation. Ever since, the Balaton area has been a rich hunting ground for archaeologists and treasure seekers. Workers at a stone quarry outside Polgardi often found coins and other artifacts, and in the years following World War II a lively trade developed between locals and the Hungarian and Soviet soldiers stationed nearby. Some of the loot was semi-valuable, but most was essentially ancient junk: bent coins, ceramic fragments.

According to the Hungarian government and police officials, on a warm day in 1978 Jozsef Sumegh, twenty-two years old, was doing a routine excavation at the Polgardi quarry when his shovel hit metal. He unearthed something the likes of which no one in the modern world had ever seen: a copper cauldron, about three feet in diameter and one foot deep, containing cunningly crafted silver plates, ewers, an amphora, and a basin of the Roman era. The treasure is known to have included at least fourteen pieces and may have included as many as thirty. The cauldron was encrusted with grime, and blackened by a cooking fire that had gone out more than 1,600 years before. The silver was barnacled by centuries of detritus, and Sumegh could not possibly have known exactly what he had found, though he must have sensed that it was extraordinary. It would turn out to be one of the most beautiful and valuable treasures ever to have survived from the ancient world.

A few months later Sumegh quit his job without explanation and moved to Budapest. He lived in a hostel. He took menial jobs. He came home every other week, and he told his family next to nothing about his life. But relatives noticed that he had taken to wearing Levi's jeans and American shirts, extravagant, expensive, and bold fashion for Communist Hungary. The only place to buy clothes like that was the flea market near the Budapest airport, a mangy fiefdom of tents and stalls ruled by Gypsies and black marketeers, where the right contacts could get one anything from belt buckles to diamonds to automatic weapons. In those days any Hungarian who wanted to unload something unusual and potentially troublesome went to the flea market.

After a few months, in early 1979, Sumegh left Budapest to fulfill his national-service requirement. He was assigned to the army barracks in Papa, a half hour's drive from Polgardi. But before he left for the army, evidence suggests, he buried the cauldron and its contents—minus at least three pieces of the silver, which he may have sold—in the dirt floor of a wine cellar adjacent to the quarry.

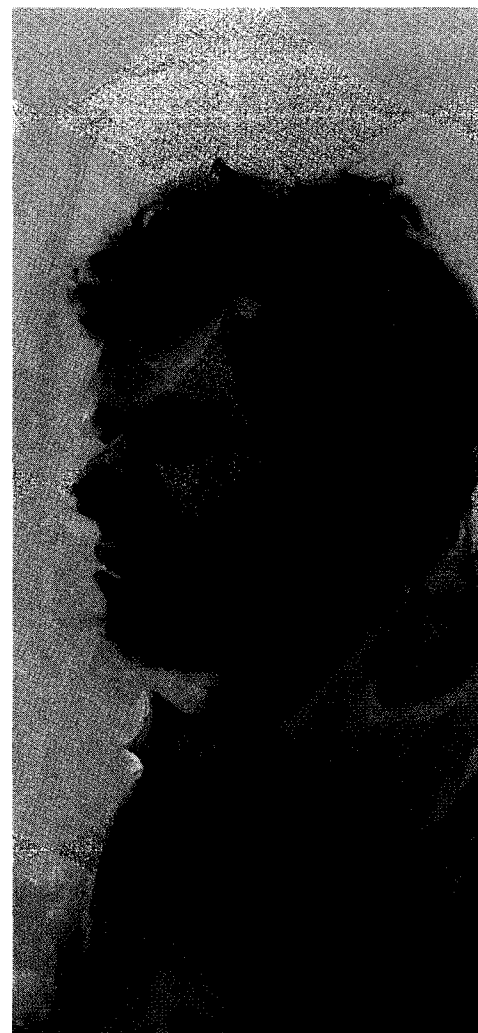
How many people Sumegh told about his find is unclear. Zoltan Fodolmes, the principal of the local school, an avid coin collector who often traded with Sumegh, says he remembers once being asked to Sumegh's house. The house was divided into two rooms. The entire family—Sumegh, his two young brothers, and their parents—slept in one of them. Sumegh's find was locked away in the other. Only he and his mother had access.

Fodolmes, now in his seventies, is stooped, his cheeks and chest sunken. He wears an expression of perpetual worry. He says that he knew from the beginning that knowledge of the treasure was dangerous; today, more than twenty years after Sumegh showed it to him, he says he is still afraid for his life. Fodolmes advised Sumegh to take the find to the national museum in Budapest. Most countries offer a reward for the surrender of found antiquities, but Hungary's citizens are required to turn everything they find over to the state museums, and they may only receive a small fee in return. Sumegh had no incentive to do anything but sell—which is what he told Fodolmes he was going to do. "And not cheap," he said. He'd had his eye on a plot of land in the village, and he wanted to buy it and build a house on it.

No one knows for sure exactly how the treasure began to find its way to market. The most likely scenario, based on interviews and circumstantial evidence, is that someone at the Budapest flea market—who also had no idea what he was dealing with—took a few pieces off Sumegh's hands. Somehow three pieces of the silver wound up in Vienna, a center of the antiquities trade, in the possession of two antiquities dealers, Halim Korban and his partner Anton Tkalec. Korban is a Lebanese who sold icons and minor antiquities out of a shop in the Vienna Hilton. Tkalec (pronounced *Ka-litz*) is a Yugoslav Serb who had developed a business selling mostly Greek and Roman coins in Zurich. His personal and political connections are believed to have run all the way to the top of the Yugoslav government. Some of those who know Tkalec say that after Sumegh passed through the flea market, Tkalec got three pieces of the silver. The first thing Tkalec would have done, they speculate, is to find out just what he had. He wasn't an antiquities expert—he was a coin guy. Korban was the one with contacts in the antiquities world.

In November of 1980 one piece of the silver was sold to a dealer consortium called the Art Consultancy. On November 24 Korban flew to London with a package. In the package was a piece of the treasure, a silver ewer or pitcher. Korban took the ewer to a web of antiquities dealers at the center of which was Peter Wilson, then sixty-seven and recently retired as the chairman of Sotheby's. Wilson was the art market's pre-eminent power broker. He had the piece taken to the British Museum for evaluation. The dealers had thought the piece was Islamic—nice but not special. After a little cleaning the museum realized that it had something Roman—and spectacular—on its hands.

Most of the pieces in Sumegh's treasure are decorated with images: exotic beasts, Achilles and Ulysses, Castor and Pollux, Atalanta. The handles of the amphora are solid silver panthers. A wine pitcher one and a half feet tall shows the revels of Bacchus in gilt. A pear-shaped pitcher of the same size has ten sides divided into 120 hexagonal panels, each with gilded figures of hunters and wild animals. What Tkalec and Korban at least suspected—and later confirmed—was that the treasure included several enormous plates, up to two and a half feet across, several inches thick, and weighing up to eighteen pounds



Jozsef Sumegh



apiece. The centerpiece is a plate engraved and inlaid with a skill that experts say is unequaled in all of surviving Roman-era silversmithing. The plate has a Latin inscription: "Let these, O Sevso, be vessels fit to serve your descendants worthily." Experts believe that Sevso was a Roman general. The antiquities curator at the Hungarian national museum, in Budapest, told me that the only ancient workshop capable of craftsmanship like this was in Thessaloniki, in Greece. Had the entire hoard been sold together, it might have pulled as much as \$200 million. Any museum in the world would consider the treasure to be its most important Roman-era possession, and any country would be eager to claim it as national patrimony.

Around the time that one piece was shown to the British Museum, Jozsef Sumegh returned to Polgardi, in Hungary. He was to be discharged from the army in a few weeks, and the army had allowed him a short leave. Before he reached home, he stopped in at a local bar. Two strangers in civilian clothes walked in and asked for him by name. The three started talking, and were seen leaving the bar together. The bartender remembers Sumegh as being drunk. The men crossed the road and then a series of fields, heading toward the wine cellar where Sumegh had stashed the treasure.

Sumegh never made it home. Two days later two Polgardi quarry workers, whose job it was to clear inhabited areas before blasting, spotted the wine cellar. Snow covered the ground, and as they approached they saw three sets of footprints leading to the cellar door but only two leading away. One of the workers remembers that two sets of footprints had been made by distinctive Soviet military boots. The workers stepped inside and found Sumegh hanging by his neck from the rafters; but Sumegh's knees were touching the floor, and limestone dust from the quarry marked his clothes, as though he had lain on the ground. Medical reports revealed that he had not died from asphyxiation. Beneath his feet, in the dirt floor, the police found a circular patch roughly three feet in diameter. It looked like a hole that had been filled in. If the Sevso treasure had indeed been hidden in this place, it was now gone.

Over the next two months two more people were found dead close by. One, a co-worker and close friend of Sumegh's, had been fed poisoned cheese. Another of Sumegh's friends was found hung by the neck in a forest. Though the police could not officially link the incidents, the deaths seem an unlikely coincidence.

II.

The itinerary of most antiquities from their source—tomb, temple, quarry—to the shelves of museums or private collectors is murky and often purposely concealed. Western museums are filled with objects harvested from Third World nations, often in violation of cultural-patrimony laws and export regulations. Coveted objects pass along a sort of food chain that begins with peasants and grave robbers trying to eke out a living; these people unload their discoveries on local agents and middlemen, who sell to dealers and smugglers operating on an international level. Most governments claim that anything found on—or under—their soil is national property, so black-market dealers must quickly cut an object's ties to its country of origin, or muck up its story to the point where a reconstruction of events is impossible. Few questions are asked, deals get forgotten, export licenses are forged, customs officials are bribed to look the other way. Once stolen antiquities have passed through enough hands and acquired enough bills of sale, their origins effectively laundered into oblivion, they will appear legitimate enough to be bought in happy ignorance and clear conscience at the highest levels—by private collectors, auction houses, and museums.

Melted down, silver is worth a little more than four dollars an ounce. But

carved, inlaid, and engraved, and identified with a particular year, it becomes the direct reflection, often the literal record, of human history, our movement through time. And time casts a magic spell over what were once simply the last known artifacts to leave an artisan's studio. They are worth whatever a person is willing to pay for heritage—his or someone else's. Of course, this also speaks to our quest for the authentic and the sacred. A nation's claim on antiquities is an attempt at national immortalization. And so antiquity's betrayal—its faking, its looting, its destruction—is seen as more than a petty crime; it is an act of national violation.

A soberer view, shared by some museum personnel and antiquities collectors, holds that immensely valuable and historically important artifacts like the Elgin Marbles and the Sevso silver treasure cannot be claimed by any one country, because they are human resources, buried by the vicissitudes of time. A Picasso, by this logic, does not automatically belong to Spain, or a Hopper to America, or a Michelangelo to Italy. The argument is a smuggler's call to arms.

Today art crime is a multibillion-dollar-a-year business, eclipsed in illegal commerce only by drug smuggling and weapons dealing. More and more often, stolen and smuggled art is moved along the same routes, and by the same people, as drugs. The FBI and U.S. Customs are gravely concerned about growing links between the antiquities trade and organized crime. Two years ago a huge collection of Greco-Roman antiquities worth more than \$2 million, snatched from a museum in Corinth, was discovered hidden in fish crates in Miami. It was packed in the same manner as a \$24 million shipment of Mafia-controlled cocaine discovered not long before. One reason art crime is becoming more popular is that the penalties are far less severe than they are for drugs. Getting caught with a Roman bust might result in a few years' imprisonment for larceny. But get caught with 100 kilos of heroin and the sentence is approximately twenty years to life. Only 10 percent of stolen art is ever recovered, which means that once sucked into the art underworld, valuable artifacts are almost never returned to their owners.

III.

My connection with the story of the Sevso silver treasure began in late November of 1999, in the course of a phone call from a Dutchman named Michel van Rijn. I had met Van Rijn the previous March, in London. We were introduced by Charles Hill, formerly the detective chief inspector of Scotland Yard's Art and Antiques Squad. I had been writing about art crime, and Hill thought it might be illuminating for me to meet Van Rijn, whom he described as a true impresario and "art-world operator; a sometime smuggler, dealer, and thief; and a fount of information—but not knowledge or wisdom—on art history and art crime." Van Rijn was also a Scotland Yard informant. In other words, he played all sides.

Van Rijn met the two of us for lunch. He is a broad man in his late forties, handsome through his bloat, with a shock of dark hair and a stripe of a moustache. His face was tintured orange by an out-of-the-can tan, and he wore a pink shirt under a plaid suit and a Hermès tie with an Egyptian motif. Below his Savile Row cuff jangled four pastel-colored bracelets. His agate eyes darted with the watchfulness of a man long on the run.

Over lunch Van Rijn talked about all the things he had bought and sold: toys, paintings, music boxes, steam calliopes, Old Master paintings and drawings. He owned a warehouse outside Amsterdam, he said, where he kept much of his trove. I asked him, half in jest, if he was related to Rembrandt van Rijn. He nodded, and added that on his mother's side he was descended from the painter Peter Paul Rubens. I didn't know whether these claims were true, or whether he believed them to be. But then I realized that whether he did or not

The workers stepped inside and found Sumegh hanging by his neck from the rafters. Beneath his feet was a circular patch roughly three feet in diameter. If the Sevso treasure had been hidden in this place, it was now gone.

didn't matter. One thing about Michel van Rijn was to become abundantly clear: to him, an insistence on truth is annoying and boring. It makes human communication cumbersome and self-defeating.

He was not simply a con man—though he did have many of the qualities that con artists have: a yearning for solitude, a love of freedom, a hatred for authority, and enormous powers of fantasy. He signed letters and notes with a cartoon drawing of a man with a devilish grin smoking a long cigarette. But Van Rijn also possessed a wealth of knowledge about the art underworld, from the smuggling of icons out of Russia to the corruption of major auction houses to various sting operations aimed at recovering stolen art.

Lunch was polite and introductory. Eight months later Van Rijn called me in New York and said we had something crucial to talk about.

But we couldn't talk by phone. I had to come to Tenerife, a Spanish protectorate off the coast of Morocco. He told me to pack for a few weeks. Then he asked me if I'd heard of the Sevso silver treasure.

By then the sordid, labyrinthine story of the Sevso silver had already begun to attract a certain amount of public attention. In February of 1990 Sotheby's announced the upcoming sale of a treasure that consisted of fourteen pieces of silver, which their brochure said had been discovered "in what was once the province of Phoenicia in the Eastern Roman Empire"—what is now Lebanon. Sotheby's believed that the silver could sell for upwards of \$150 million. On February 9 the London *Independent* had published several articles about Sotheby's auction, reporting that although the provenance was unknown, the treasure was thought to have been found in either Lebanon or Eastern Europe. The morning they ran, one of their two authors, a journalist named David Keys, received a phone call from a man who gave the story a new twist, which the *Independent* revealed a month later. That article said that the Sevso silver had most likely been found in the early 1970s by elite Yugoslav troops on military territory near the town of Pula, on the Istrian Peninsula of Croatia. The tip confused rather than clarified matters—and that may have been the intention. In the antiquities world smugglers and sellers attempt to cover their tracks either with total silence or with confusing details and alternatives. Keys's source obviously had an interest in kinking the chain that led back to the treasure's origins. (Keys would not reveal his source.)

Sotheby's lavish brochure described the treasure as the "most important Late Antique silver ever to be offered publicly for sale." The seller was a British aristocrat—Spencer Douglas David Compton, Marquess of Northampton, who was then listed as the ninety-fourth richest man in England. The Art Consultancy had brought in Northampton as their primary investor. What the brochure did not say was that Northampton had bought part of the treasure several years before, that he had been trying to unload it ever since, and that whoever had sold it to him had gone to extraordinary lengths to plant evidence of a discovery in Lebanon.

Northampton told the police in 1990, soon after they had begun to investigate the Sevso silver, that he doesn't have much business sense and didn't doubt what he was being told about its origins. Halim Korban and Anton Tkalec had taken whatever pieces of the treasure they had—acquired by means that remain a mystery—and begun to enact a classic bazaar stratagem. They doled out the silver one or two pieces at a time, first to the Art Consultancy,



then to Northampton. Weeks or months later another morsel, and then another, would appear. Knowing that a partial treasure is worth nowhere near what a whole one is, Northampton kept buying. Eventually he spent somewhere around \$16 million, and got fourteen pieces—the complete treasure, or so he thought. He never intended to keep the treasure, considering it purely an investment. He'd been promised by his advisers that he would at least triple his money by reselling. He had met Korban and Tkalec a few times. At one point he asked about the origins of the silver and was told that it had been found in the Tyre and Sidon regions of Lebanon. He had no reason to think otherwise.

"The first of the silver sold with no documentation at all, not even a receipt," Richard Ellis, then a detective sergeant at Scotland Yard, says. "Peter Mimpriss [Northampton's lawyer] insisted some invoices be provided. Korban provided these invoices. They needed a story to show where it came from. They couldn't say it came from Hungary, because the Hungarians would say they wanted the treasure back." There were also a few bodies lying around, possibly connected with the Sevso silver. "So Hungary was out of the question. The next obvious place was across the border [in Yugoslavia], where Tkalec himself came from. Then Korban, being Lebanese, and having influential family members—both his sisters were believed to be married to generals in the Christian militia—obtained Lebanese export licenses." A London-based antiquities dealer who once worked with Tkalec told me that at first Tkalec had merely been vague about the silver's origins. Later Tkalec told him that he'd bought the silver from Gypsies in the Macedonian town of Strumica. Shortly after the fake Lebanese export licenses had been obtained, the dealer said to Tkalec, "But you told me it came from Macedonia." To which Tkalec replied, "Well, now it comes from Lebanon."

Northampton and his advisers soon ran into problems. Their prime target for resale had always been the wealthiest museum in the world, the J. Paul Getty Museum, in Los Angeles, and at first the museum was eager. "It was a phenomenal thing," says Marion True, the Getty's curator of antiquities. "Extremely interesting iconography on a fabulous scale. It would have been on a par with other great treasures. It was of tremendous importance." But the Getty's associate curator of antiquities at the time, Arthur Houghton III, noticed inconsistencies in the forged Lebanese licenses. He had lived in the Middle East for years, and was fluent in Arabic; he saw immediately that the same name had been signed in different handwriting. The Getty wanted the treasure's pedigree to be documented well enough to show that the museum had practiced due diligence. The real origin of the treasure mattered less than credible documentation that it had passed through good hands and was therefore a legitimate target for acquisition. According to the Yard, Peter Mimpriss tried to rectify the forgery problem by arranging for new Lebanese documents. His agent in Beirut, Ramiz Rizk, sent Mimpriss a telex implying that Lebanon's director of the department of museums could be induced to provide documents that would look authentic. "He is a very honest and careful man and has indicated that in no way he will accept any present. But I am persisting and have not made my offer yet and I am guided by my motto 'If he has a mouth he will eat.'" Later that day Mimpriss replied, by telex, "We look forward to hearing the result of your meeting with the Managing Director ... We hope he is still hungry."

Houghton suspected foul play and urged the Getty to pull out of the deal, and eventually it did. The museum might have gone for the treasure had the sellers been more careful in their ruse. (A spokesman for Peter Mimpriss, James Broomfield, says, "We would not regard it as either productive or appropriate to re-enter discussions about that.")

Faced with the collapse of a story line for the silver's provenance, and thus with the loss of his investment, Northampton called Tkalec, wanting to know

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where the silver had come from. Tkalec's "reaction was to say that I was mad to want to know where it had come from," Northampton said in a statement to the British police in 1990. "He continued that if I knew, it would create much more trouble ... I have spoken to Tkalec on the telephone on other occasions recently when he has contacted me. On one such occasion ... he told me that it was important that I destroy the ... copper basin," which Northampton had bought with the silver. The cauldron was crucial to Hungary's claim on the silver. According to the police and to archaeological experts, soil samples from the cauldron, which Northampton had released for testing, and microorganisms from the silver matched those from the Polgardi region.

Before the auction was announced, Sotheby's notified the twenty-nine countries whose territory had once made up the Roman Empire of the impending sale of the Sevso treasure. This was a matter of due diligence, more or less expected by the art world. Sotheby's received three indignant replies: from Yugoslavia, on behalf of Croatia, whose officials had been electrified by the scant information in a March *Independent* article; from Lebanon, probably owing to the bogus claim about the treasure's origins; and from Hungary, which insisted that the treasure had been found in its soil, that the man who unearthed it had been murdered, and that the silver was a critical piece of its cultural patrimony.

The three countries sued Northampton for the treasure's return, in the state supreme court in New York City—where Sotheby's was displaying the silver. The silver was immediately locked away in a New York vault. The Hungarians seem to have had the strongest case. The word "Pelso," inscribed on the most magnificent of the Sevso plates, was the known Roman name for Lake Balaton, and below it was an engraved image of water. Scientific data—soil samples swabbed from the silver itself—placed the treasure's burial site in an area with a geological makeup identical to western Hungary's. And sitting in a museum in Budapest was a silver tripod decorated with many of the same exquisite carvings and depictions of the hunt, which had been found in Polgardi in 1873. The antiquities curator at the Hungarian national museum told me that archaeologists who examined both the tripod and the Sevso treasure concluded that it was all most likely made by the same hand. Then there was the story of Jozsef Sumegeh. His death, originally recorded as a suicide by military investigators, is now believed to be a murder. His surviving friends and family members had recently been interviewed. A strong circumstantial case had surfaced that Sumegeh had been murdered over the silver.

But in court all three countries were badly outmaneuvered by Northampton's lawyers. Citing evidentiary rules, the judge in the case, Beatrice Shainswit, refused to allow the tripod or the allegations regarding Jozsef Sumegeh's death to be submitted as evidence. Still, even though the Hungarians couldn't wrest the silver from Northampton, uncertainty about the treasure's origins made it difficult to sell, and Northampton was stuck with his fourteen pieces of silver. (He sued his lawyers and, according to the *Birmingham Post*, was awarded almost \$40 million in an out-of-court settlement.)

The loss in court did not deter the Hungarian government, which believed that there were at least thirty pieces to the treasure—that a second half, presumably as valuable as Northampton's cache, was somewhere out there up for grabs. What the Hungarians now wanted to know was who had the missing silver and where it was. Short of expertise and resources, but determined, Hungary appealed for help from Scotland Yard's famous Art and Antiques Squad.

In May of 1990 Dick Ellis's partner, Detective Sergeant Tony Russell, flew to Indianapolis to interview an antiquities collector named Peg Goldberg. The Art and Antiques Squad had heard that Goldberg knew something about the Sevso

treasure. Goldberg had recently bought four valuable early-Christian mosaics for about \$1 million, not knowing that they had been looted from a Cypriot church. Forced to surrender the mosaics, during and after her ordeal she learned more about the underground antiquities trade than she cared to know. It was Michel van Rijn who had engineered the sale of the mosaics, and it was Van Rijn who had later blown the whistle and led the police to the goods.

Goldberg told Russell that she thought she had been shown one of the huge plates—and not one from Northampton's trove. This seemed to confirm that there was more to the treasure than Northampton's pieces. Goldberg asked Russell if he would like to talk to someone who knew more about the treasure than she did. He said yes. Russell says she put him in touch with Van Rijn.

In the early 1990s Van Rijn was in the United States, secretly collaborating with the FBI and the DEA, he says. He had landed in St. Louis. According to a front-page story in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1992, in short order Van Rijn moved into a rented mansion, persuaded a local businessman to pay \$650,000 for a "Rembrandt" and an "El Greco," and tried to fob off a painting of the Madonna as a Leonardo on a curator at a St. Louis museum. Another source said that Van Rijn had borrowed \$500,000 from a wealthy candy distributor and that he owed other money all over town. The article said that by the time bill collectors and repo men converged at the mansion, Van Rijn was gone.

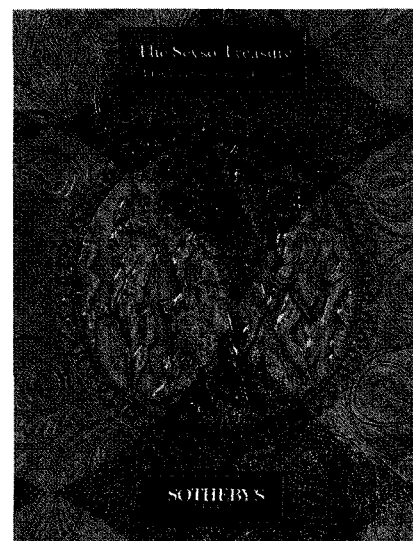
But he soon turned up in Indianapolis, apparently eager to talk to Russell. And Russell was eager to talk to him. But for some reason Van Rijn didn't give Russell any useful information on this occasion. The years went by, and then, in 1998, he told the Yard that he knew who had the missing silver, where it was, and how it could be rescued. "We heard about the usual Michel trail of devastation," Ellis told me later. "On the one hand having some people over, on the other putting a few things right. He'd been having his fun with the art-business world and the FBI?"

Ellis called Eva Hajdu-Bankuti, the commissioner of the Sevso treasure in the Hungarian Ministry of Culture, and came back to Van Rijn with an offer. "He agreed to help us flesh this out for a reward," Ellis recalled. The Hungarians, according to Van Rijn, agreed to pay him \$1.7 million if he got back their treasure.

IV.

In early December of 1999 Van Rijn called me in New York. A few days later I was waiting for him in the lobby of the leafy colonial Hotel Mencey, in Tenerife. He arrived accompanied by a tall, very beautiful young woman who looked to be in her thirties. He carried a briefcase and wore an expression of brooding concentration. Everyone who worked in the hotel seemed to know him, and he nodded to various figures standing around the lobby. His handshake was perfunctory. He told me he had some business to attend to and asked me to wait. He and the young woman sat on a couch across from me and began to look through a book of Picasso reproductions. Van Rijn turned the pages, stopping at certain images, gesturing as if he was drawing in the air. The woman leaned forward, elbows on her knees, nodding. At one point Van Rijn rose and crossed to me and asked if I had a copy of an article I had written for *The New York Times Magazine* about a British forger and a con man who had conspired to sell fake Giacomettis and Chagalls through the world's top auction houses. What had made the scam surprising was the shocking mediocrity of the pictures and the almost willful self-delusion of the buyers. I did have a copy, because Van Rijn had asked me to bring it. He and the woman looked it over, pointing at the pictures of the fakes. They laughed and shook their heads in amazement. Then the woman kissed Van Rijn good-bye and left.

Van Rijn came over to sit with me. He asked if I knew who David Stein was.





Michel van Rijn

Stein, a former art dealer from France who is believed to live now in Monaco, was once one of the world's most notorious forgers, specializing in Picasso, Chagall, Matisse, and others. He had done jail time. But, Van Rijn said, Stein wasn't as good as everyone thought. The young woman who had just left was the master talent, the source of Stein's genius. She had done most of his best work. Van Rijn wanted to encourage her. He wanted her to paint him some Picassos. I never knew whether the woman was a real faker or Van Rijn had presented her to me just for show.

We moved to the hotel's sparsely populated patio, where a young man in a waistcoat was singing pop songs, accompanying himself on a synthesizer. When Van Rijn entered, the singer nodded at him and segued into the theme song from *The Godfather*. Van Rijn's eyes moistened. "He's playing that for me," he said, sitting down with a sigh. When the song was over, Van Rijn was the only one who clapped.

Van Rijn told me that he now lived in Tenerife, in self-exile with his wife and two of his children, in a villa with a view of the sea. He had abandoned his London townhouse six months before, he said, because he'd been receiving death threats. From whom he wouldn't say, but he alluded to Iranian smugglers he had exposed as having sold looted antiquities to the Miho Museum, in Japan. In the early nineties, he said, he had moved back to London from New York after the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, in Boston, was robbed of three Rembrandts and a Vermeer. Van Rijn leaned forward. He said he had been an early suspect in the robbery, and had skipped town just ahead of the FBI. He hadn't arranged the heist, he said, but he knew who had, and where the paintings might be. He said something suggestive about art's sometimes being stolen as leverage to get out of another kind of jam—getting caught smuggling drugs, for instance. If he exposed the Gardner conspiracy, he said, he'd almost certainly be killed. Then he sat back. He said that when all this was over, by which he meant the Sevso affair, he would have to move yet again. He mentioned Bali. He mentioned various Caribbean destinations. "We've lived in eight countries," he said wearily.

He made an elaborate ceremony of lighting his cigarette, squinted through the smoke, and sighed. "So," he said breezily. "Sevso?"

He complained that in the past few years The Company (which is what he sometimes called Scotland Yard) hadn't gotten anywhere, that it had bungled the operation. I asked him what operation he was talking about, and he waved me off—he'd fill me in on everything later. "Everything—slowly, slowly," he said, gently reproaching me. It was to be the subtext of every conversation Van Rijn and I would have in the future: he had the information, he had the control. Language that passed between Van Rijn and someone else was rarely a conversation. It was usually a skirmish. One was always too eager, always under-informed. He would lead one to the light, but one had to wait. He said it was about manners, but really it was about power.

Eventually Van Rijn told me that the Hungarians were getting impatient. They had gone around the Yard and approached him directly. They had asked him to open negotiations with Anton Tkalec, to pay Tkalec outright for the rest of the treasure. They hoped to win back Northampton's portion in court and put the entire collection on display in the national museum. Van Rijn was trying to build a case that connected Tkalec not only to the silver but also to the murders. Although Tkalec was an initial suspect in the murders, neither the Hungarians nor Scotland Yard has been able to prove his involvement, and Tkalec denies that he was even in Hungary at the time. "Tkalec is willing to play ball as long as he gets immunity for the murders," Van Rijn said. "He's holding sixteen pieces. I'm going to succeed where Scotland Yard failed." "Look," he later said, "in the

art business you don't have friends and don't expect to make friends. You are fighting a war where no prisoners are taken. I am no saint, but I have some dignity left, and that's the part I want to live with the rest of my life ... Some people get hurt. You can't do it endlessly [the rip-offs]. You have a conscience. You have to live with it. My conscience is to fuck Tkalec, nail the guy. But what do we do? We're going to make him rich, bring him one and a half million pounds and immunity."

Van Rijn's stream-of-consciousness sounded like a recitation, as though he'd said it before—and many times. I already knew that he liked to talk to journalists and often invited them to hear his stories and to witness the unfolding of events. Sevso, he later assured me, was going to be his last hurrah. He had been seized with a different sort of ambition. Van Rijn had been writing. In 1993 he published a ghost-written memoir, *Hot Art, Cold Cash*, that details his many schemes, duplicities, and amorous adventures. The book opens with a fifteen-year-old Van Rijn in Amsterdam selling sheepskin coats he'd bought in Istanbul, then quickly moves to him smuggling Byzantine icons out of Russia, then to fencing looted antiquities, and then to forging them. He'd lived and operated in Amsterdam, Paris, London, Palm Beach, Beirut. He was imprisoned in Spain. The book is fun and light, full of bravado, and some portions of it might even be true, though no one—perhaps not even Van Rijn—can be certain which. In 1999 he published a novel in his native Holland, *The Mecca Manuscript*, an art-world thriller populated with busty female spies and dastardly villains. He had even begun to write a soap opera about the Sevso mystery, with him as the protagonist. "I'm ending my career," he said. "Mind you, never say never. But I want to be a full-time writer. And I want to go out of this business with a bang."

Van Rijn leaned back, rooted in his pants pocket, and brought out a large coin. It looked old. He began to play with it. "It's worth a million dollars," he told me. Then he lowered his voice an octave and gestured grandly with his cigarette. "I was involved from the start [of the Sevso affair] with Korban, who I know from Beirut—a nice guy, but afraid of his own shadow. He was used by Tkalec, and was not strong enough to stand up to him. He doesn't have the weapons to defend himself. He made a lot of money selling the treasure piece by piece. But Tkalec can never share, he can never give. He's dangerous. He was a small-time crook and coin dealer who clawed his way up. He has this grocery mentality. He's not the kind of dealer who adds to the market. He skims the market; he always takes. When I dealt with him, I disliked him. I wanted to put him in his place there and then. Tkalec is the guy I would love to bring down at the end of my career. For me, this is my *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The game is over."

It now seemed obvious that what Van Rijn craved, and wanted from me, was his very own Boswell, a chronicler of his last "bang." But the safer move for him seemed to be to walk away. There was his family to worry about, and the next, dreaded decampment. I suggested this to Van Rijn. His eyes took on a faraway look. Again he leaned in. "*Kavla*," he said, and then sat back. His entire life, he said, had been based on the pursuit of a sensation he learned of while apprenticing as a fur trader in the bazaars of Turkey: *kavla*, the moment in sex just before climax, a state of pleasurable frenzy when everything is still possible and disappointment has not yet occurred. In the marketplace *kavla* is the moment just before a deal is sealed. It is a moment to be savored, Van Rijn said, if not extended for as long as possible.

Later, in London, I was to hear a story that suggested another, less prosaic reason Van Rijn had it in for Tkalec. In Amsterdam a few years before, Van Rijn's life had been seriously, and verifiably, in danger over an art scam with some Yugoslavs that went sour. Van Rijn laid low for a while, and during his absence rumors circulated that he had been killed. Around that time, when a minor dealer accused Tkalec of cheating him, Tkalec reportedly warned, "Be

One thing about Michel van Rijn was to become abundantly clear: to him, an insistence on truth is annoying and boring. But he was not simply a con man—he possessed a wealth of knowledge about the art underworld.

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Van Rijn opened his briefcase. Inside were two dozen cassette tapes and a tape recorder. He has secretly recorded nearly every phone conversation he has had. He plugged in the recorder and began to tell me his side of a strange story.

careful, or you'll end up like the Dutchman"—meaning Van Rijn. Van Rijn confirmed the story, and admitted that when he heard what Tkalec had said, he vowed to exact revenge one day. It was, he said, a point of honor.

But Van Rijn may have had yet another, more psychologically probable reason for wanting to bring down Tkalec: professional envy. In the early nineties Korban was interrogated by Scotland Yard about the Sevso treasure, and was asked about his relationship with Van Rijn. Korban replied, "I have nothing against him, but I knew I would never make business with him, deal with him directly, because he ..." Korban trailed off. Then he said, "He was really, at the start, when I met him, in 1972, ... a very nice chap, very honest, very correct. But later on he started to have difficulties." Korban was asked if he had ever offered Van Rijn the silver. "No," he replied, "but he came to me trying to pick up on me, if I have something. I told him, 'Look, sorry, you are not a client. If you were a client maybe we could speak.' That's all, but he was possibly jealous. He knew that I was selling the silver."

Van Rijn also had a history of inviting journalists into his world and luring them away from their objectivity. Exposing or entrapping a con man, after all, sometimes means also becoming one—entering into a circular conspiracy of seduction, deception, and self-deception in which one makes a show of being convinced, and then thinks one is convinced, until, finally, one *is* convinced. In the world of antiquities the origins of everything are shrouded in lies and silence. But everything is also on offer: trust, friendship, and especially information. Early on Van Rijn asked for a commitment from me to cut him in on any film option arising from my story about the Sevso silver. It was inevitable that, always hyper-conscious of himself as a man playing an actor playing Michel van Rijn, he would contemplate how Hollywood might portray him. It was also inevitable that mere access was going to cost me an entrance fee. I agreed to a deal.

V.

When I asked people to talk about Anton Tkalec, I got the feeling I was putting a gun to their heads. No one knows Tkalec. Even the ones who do don't. Coin and antiquities dealers in the United States and Europe shrug, smirk, or wag their heads when his name comes up. On the phone dealers were too polite to hang up, but all I got was sighs and silence.

Few details about Tkalec are known. Now around fifty, Tkalec is a heavy-drinking, chain-smoking recluse who "likes to live in his own world with his cronies around him," according to a former associate of his, who has known him for twenty-seven years and would speak only anonymously. He was born in Belgrade. In the late 1960s he moved with his wife to Vienna, where he studied mechanical drawing and took a job as a draftsman in an architectural firm. Either he went to Vienna to escape military service or he decided not to return for duty once he was there; in any case, he couldn't return to Belgrade without being arrested. According to Belgrade newspapers, he divorced, married an Austrian belly dancer, became an Austrian citizen, and at some point—no one knows when—began seriously to traffic in ancient coins. His sometime business partner and closest friend at the time, Victor Ristovic, was, according to sources in Belgrade, a crony and business associate of a man named Zeljko Raznatovic, who later became known as Arkan, a Serb paramilitary leader accused of war atrocities. (Street urchins, Ristovic and Raznatovic, according to common lore, defected to Italy at fifteen to learn the criminal trade. Raznatovic's trajectory is infamous: seduced by the glitter of hard-core smuggling, born again as a corrupt Serb "patriot" and then as an indicted war criminal, he was shot to death in the lobby of the Intercontinental Hotel in Belgrade in January, 2000.) Through his connections Tkalec is said to have had his

strongest rivals in Belgrade harassed, raided, temporarily jailed, and ruined. In 1975 or 1976 he met Halim Korban. By then the Serbian Numismatic Society was reportedly tipping Tkalec off whenever anything valuable—coins, antiquities—appeared anywhere in Yugoslavia. When appropriate, he teamed up with Korban to sell the goods. Tkalec placed scouts throughout Serbia and Macedonia. He advanced Numismatic Society members money to buy anything of value on his behalf.

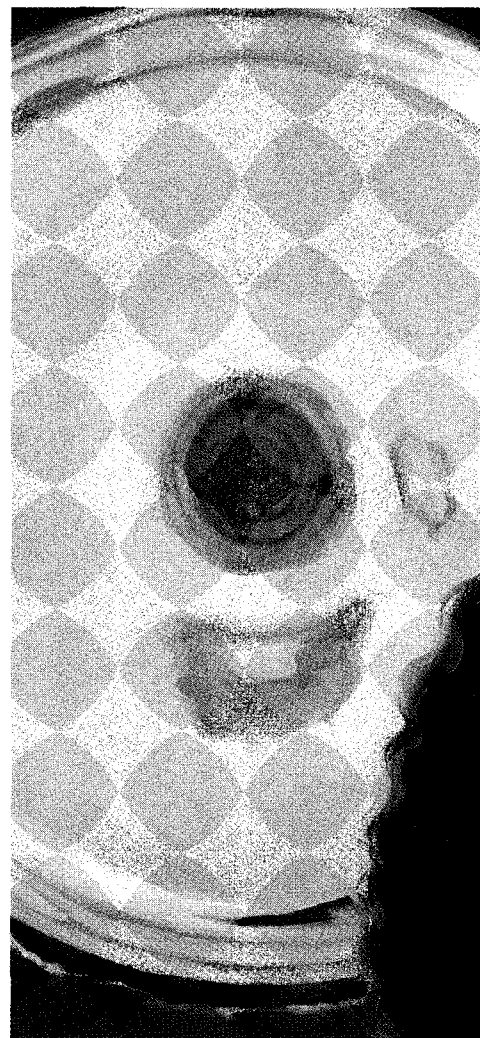
On April 29, 1990, nearly three months after Sotheby's announced the upcoming sale of Northampton's portion of the Sevso treasure, Tkalec and Ristovic were arrested while trying to enter Yugoslavia. The Serbian police interrogated Tkalec about the treasure for twenty-four hours and then released him. They held Ristovic for two more days. Neither was charged with anything. But stories began appearing in the Belgrade newspapers, quoting Ristovic as their main source and saying that the silver had been found on the Serbian-Macedonian border by Gypsies, who had then sold it to Tkalec for a song. Tkalec was working for the Serbian secret police, the papers said, perhaps as an informant, perhaps as penance for his draft-dodging. In his home town he was now larger than life, a rags-to-riches merchant who was dangerous and powerful. Very few people knew what he looked like.

By the early 1990s Tkalec was, by all accounts, hugely wealthy, at least in part because of his share of the Sevso proceeds. (Korban is thought to have made around \$10 million.) He was the No. 1 coin dealer in the world. "He could buy up the entire coin trade with one of his bank accounts alone," the former associate of Tkalec's told me. "Everything will always fall in his direction. He is extremely clever. He's cultured. He has this amazing passion for coins. He understands the most ruthless levels as well as the finer points. Tkalec goes forward like a ratchet wheel, never slips backward. He is capable of working at an almost superhuman rate. He'll spend nights and nights awake cleaning coins."

VI.

The morning after we met in Tenerife, Van Rijn came up to my room at the Mencey and dropped his briefcase on the bed. He began to refer again to Scotland Yard's bungling of the Sevso operation. By then I knew enough to wait for clarity. He opened his briefcase. Inside were two dozen cassette tapes and a tape recorder. The cassettes were labeled in Van Rijn's hurried scrawl: "Double-cross," "No backing of Yard," "\$1,000,000 to me as bait for Tkalec." Van Rijn has secretly recorded nearly every phone conversation he has had—with police officers, criminals, journalists. He has taped all the antagonists and protagonists of his life's daily dramas, because at any hour an ally might become an enemy, and might need reminding of the potentially damaging content of certain conversations. "They're not [Linda] Tripp tapes," he insisted. "I record them out of the preservation of life." He plugged in the recorder and began to tell me his side of a strange story.

Three months before, in September of 1999, still in search of his last bang, Van Rijn had informed his handlers at Scotland Yard that Tkalec and the missing portion of the Sevso hoard could now be had. Van Rijn's idea was a classic buy-and-bust operation: lure Tkalec into exposing the silver with a trick purchase and then seize the loot—and Tkalec. The plan required a decoy customer of supreme plausibility; that is, someone wealthy enough to contemplate spending a few tens of millions of dollars. Also, to calm Tkalec's legendary paranoia, it had to be someone who wouldn't run to the police if things went sour. Someone, in other words, who may well have had things to hide. Van Rijn had the perfect candidate.





In late September, Van Rijn met with Yard detectives at the British embassy in Madrid. He had with him an old friend, a man he and the detectives had been referring to in telephone conversations as “our friend in Spain.” The friend was Felice Cultrera, an amateur art-and-antiquities collector; the owner of casinos in Paris, Belgrade, and Prague; someone who was allegedly linked to the Sicilian drug-running Santapaola Mafia; and a money man for the weapons merchant Adnan Kashoggi. A man, in other words, with resources, but also with ambitions and plans of his own.

Described as lithe, well-tailored, and elegantly spoken, Cultrera liked to point out that in addition to his other activities he wrote poetry. His credentials as a prospective buyer for the silver were impeccable: he lived in a mansion in Marbella, on Spain’s Costa del Sol, and he collected coins. Moreover, he had already, in effect, seeded the operation. Van Rijn had spent almost \$25,000 on coins that Cultrera had taken to Zurich, knowing he’d eventually be directed to Tkalec. When Cultrera met Tkalec, he suggested that they might have some other business to do. Cultrera told the detectives that he could introduce Tkalec to Adnan Kashoggi at his casino in Paris, so that Tkalec could see he wasn’t dealing with an idiot. He would invite Tkalec to his home in Marbella, to see his expensive antiques. The strategy, in the language of the sting, was “slowly, slowly.” Make Tkalec feel comfortable over time; get him to lower his guard.

Van Rijn said that Cultrera agreed to play because “he is twenty-five years my friend.” But as compensation for completing the sting, Cultrera wanted something from Scotland Yard. He had not actually been charged with anything in his native Italy, but the Italian constitution permits the police to jail someone indefinitely merely on suspicion of a crime. He wanted the British to facilitate a conversation between his attorneys and the Italian Carabinieri, so that he could travel to Sicily without being tossed in prison. He wanted, eventually, to die in Sicily. He wanted to see his grandchildren. Cultrera was the ideal decoy.

Next Van Rijn told me something extraordinary: during the Madrid meeting, he claimed, the Yard contingent, led by Detective Chief Superintendent Andy Sellers, suggested that Van Rijn engineer the kidnapping of Anton Tkalec and then shake him down for the silver. “Whatever was discussed in the meetings in the British embassy in Madrid, I didn’t believe my eyes what they brought to the table,” Van Rijn said, his eyebrows arched, his expression full of disbelief. “Tkalec was to be taken to the casino of ‘my friend in Spain.’ At some point Cultrera would have taken him aside and made him an offer he couldn’t say no to. We would have pressed the silver out of him physically.”

Van Rijn saw my expression. “You don’t believe me?” He slipped a cassette into the recorder. The tape was already cued to an October 24 conversation between him and Detective Sergeant Kevin Naidoo, of Scotland Yard. On the tape Van Rijn can be heard saying “We are going to set things in progress. What if the situation arises to take [Tkalec] to another place, the casino of my friend. Would that be an option?” Naidoo replies, “Of course it would. We have to be flexible with how [Cultrera] plays the situation. If that is the appropriate thing to do, then that’s what we do.” Although Van Rijn was trying to convince me that the kidnapping was the Yard’s idea, just the opposite was true. Sellers told me that the idea had been proposed at the Madrid meeting, but not by the Yard. “We laughed,” Sellers said. “It was so preposterous.”

Cultrera arranged a second meeting with Tkalec in Zurich for October 28. Sellers and the other detectives arrived two days earlier as an advance party. Unbeknown to them, however, according to Van Rijn, he and Cultrera had been contemplating something far grander than a sting or a kidnapping culminating in an arrest. It would be a plot twist that would allow Van Rijn to end a long career as scam artist, informant, and renegade with a flourish. Van Rijn says that

Cultrera took him to Seville and introduced him to a master silversmith—a magician of a craftsman who could do anything with metal, even copy something as intricate as the Sevso silver. Outside the silversmith's studio, Van Rijn says, he asked Cultrera, “You didn’t bring me here for nothing, did you?” Felice said, “What do you think? This guy is the most capable forger I’ve ever met in my life, and I’ve seen many.”

Then Van Rijn told me that Tkalec—whom he had condemned just the day before as his mortal enemy—was to have been folded into the plan, and that after the treasure had been attained, they would have substituted some of the fake for some of the real and held on to the authentic pieces, worth tens of millions of dollars. They would then have either sold them to a private dealer or kept them as trophies, or as leverage.

“I loved the idea [of the forgery], of course,” Van Rijn told me, standing by the window of my hotel room, which overlooked the pool and the outdoor café. The sound of splashing and pop music wafted in. “It was a great scam.” Later, on the phone, he told me, “When you take the police out of their environment, they don’t have anything to grab on to. You stay in charge. That’s when the music starts playing. You go slowly, slowly toward your target. The deal, in the end, if you do it or you don’t do it, it doesn’t matter.” In other words, all *kavla*, all the time.

Van Rijn returned to my hotel the next day, brandishing another cassette tape. He told me excitedly that the Hungarians wanted to make a deal. He’d just had a conversation with Eva Hajdu-Bankuti. Van Rijn and I sat on the bed. The other compromising cassette tapes were spread behind us. Van Rijn’s face took on a radiance. He was in his element. The tape recorder was spinning.

“Scotland Yard didn’t want to inform the Hungarians that they were going to Switzerland, because they don’t trust the Hungarians,” I heard Van Rijn telling Hajdu-Bankuti. “What if you give me immunity to negotiate the sixteen pieces which are out there? I will cut a deal with Tkalec, in which he receives immunity, and we can then buy the pieces for a reasonable amount, because he cannot sell them to anybody.”

“So this is not a trick?” Hajdu-Bankuti replied.

“No,” Van Rijn said.

“I feel the Interior Minister himself also would like to solve the problem ... We can make a deal with you.”

“We have to keep it very quiet,” Van Rijn said, “because the Yard is not going to be over the moon, if you know what I mean.”

Later, when talking about the risks, Hajdu-Bankuti said, “Nobody wants you to die because of this.”

Van Rijn grew excited that his plan was beginning to take shape. He asked Hajdu-Bankuti if the statute of limitations for the murder would be up soon, making the offer of immunity to Tkalec meaningless. She said there was still one more year “for the murder.”

“I hate to see this guy walk free. He is such a piece of shit.”

“I know. But all of us would like to somehow solve the problem, would like to finish it.”

VII.

Van Rijn and I flew into Budapest on the cold and misty night of December 13. Eva Hajdu-Bankuti met us at the airport. She is a small woman, and surprisingly droll.

She drove us to the Budapest Hilton Hotel, which sits, fortresslike, high above the Danube. We were met in the lobby by Lieutenant-Colonel Bela Vukan, of the Hungarian national police, and three other men, who stood silently by and didn’t bother to say anything about who or what they were. The Hun-

The safer move for Van Rijn seemed to be to walk away. There was his family to worry about, and the next, dreaded decampment. I suggested this to Van Rijn. His eyes took on a faraway look. He leaned in. “*Kavla*,” he said, and then sat back.

Andy Sellers, of Scotland Yard, was obviously the last man on earth with whom Van Rijn could do business. At the mere mention of Van Rijn's name Sellers's jaw tightened, his hands clenched his chair, and he shook his head slowly.

garians wore drab clothes and serious expressions, and looked tired. Van Rijn's eyes were alight, and in his flashy clothing and gaudy tan he walked through the doors of the hotel lobby looking poised and important. That is how the Hungarians treated him, leaning forward, hanging on his every word.

The group huddled in a corner over coffee, and I waited to one side. By then, it turned out, the Hungarians had decided that their other options for getting the silver back had been used up. They were also loath to pay Tkalec for anything that they believed was rightly theirs. As he later recounted to me, Van Rijn listened and then told them that they wouldn't have to. He already had another plan. Not only would he and Cultrera retrieve the silver by kidnapping Tkalec and forcing it out of him, but, as a bonus, he would deliver Halim Korban, who could easily be persuaded to testify against Tkalec—or at least to make a statement connecting him directly to the murders. Van Rijn said that \$410,000 would do the job of persuading Korban; he would spend the money in Korban's shop in Beirut, perhaps on a chandelier. The Hungarians, Van Rijn said, immediately authorized the bribe. (The Hungarians later disputed that there had been any discussion of either a bribe or a kidnapping at the Budapest meeting.)

That night, according to Van Rijn, they plotted out an operation that could potentially have crossed the bounds of international law: the retrieval of Tkalec's half of the treasure by force. The job was to be contracted out to Felice Cultrera, who would be free to do whatever was necessary to secure the treasure. The Hungarians were not to be told the method. They supposedly agreed to Van Rijn's fee of \$1.25 million, which he was to split with Cultrera, and which included Korban's bribe. Only the date of the operation had yet to be arranged.

I began to wonder about who I had become in this story. Van Rijn's actions had begun to seem more and more like performance, and I the audience. If a kidnapping was in the works, then I possessed knowledge of a future crime. But knowledge was responsibility, and from this point on I would be less an observer than a participant. I had to leave Budapest, and I told Van Rijn that I was going in the morning.

The next morning I found a note under my door. I also found a small sable paintbrush. Van Rijn had told me that his father was a painter, and that since his father's death he had carried around one of his brushes. He was bequeathing it to me, along with his confidence. "Don't forget that I am still here," he wrote me. "Please don't forget that *nobody* will be straight with you. I gave you all I could give you to bring this story to a good end. Double agendas, deceit, reputations on the line. Don't believe anything people want you to believe. This is a world of betrayal. I was the best. It was enough." He'd signed off with a cartoon of a moustachioed man wearing a devil's goatee—his usual signature.

Driving along the Danube in a taxi on the way to the Budapest airport, I couldn't stop myself from wondering if Van Rijn carried a briefcase full of small sable paintbrushes as brand-new, and clean, as mine was—if he'd given out two dozen of them over the years.

VIII.

Vesna Girardi led the Croatian committee on Sevso, which was assembled after the appearance of the *Independent* articles. I met with Girardi in her apartment in the town of Pula last May. She fired off an impenetrable commentary listing the reasons the treasure belongs to Croatia. Her list was a short one. "Well, why not have this in Croatia?" was her ultimate point. She told me that the government had taken the *Independent* articles as gospel. I asked her if she realized that the reporter had been unable to confirm any part of the tip he had been given. She said she didn't know that, but she didn't seem at all dissuaded.

Besides, an eyewitness had appeared, she said. He had surfaced shortly after the *Independent* articles ran. He was a seventy-two-year-old former secret policeman named Anton Cvek. Cvek claims that on May 15, 1961, he was ordered by army officers to report to a high-security military base near Barbariga. When he arrived, he was told that during a routine excavation on Brioni Island, just offshore, soldiers had uncovered Roman ruins and a stone sarcophagus. The sarcophagus contained a hoard of spectacular silver, which, he says, was the Sevso treasure. Brioni was the summer residence of Marshal Tito, and strictly off limits, so the silver had been carried to the mainland and stored in a small house not far from Brioni. Cvek said that he was accompanied by a technician named Vlado Klikic, who filmed the silver and took some photographs, and that Klikic died shortly afterward and the film and photographs vanished.

Barbariga is a Croatian seaside village just north of Pula. As in Hungary, Roman ruins are scattered throughout the countryside. In the heart of Pula stands the astonishing sight of a Roman stadium nearly as big as the Roman Coliseum, and in much better condition. Barbariga's rocky coast was once a kind of Roman high-end subdivision, with villa after villa overlooking the Adriatic. Some of the Romans who fled the barbarians in Pannonia settled here, with nowhere else to go but back to Rome itself, across the water. This is just one reason the Croatians are convinced that the Sevso silver belongs to them. Maybe the silver started its journey in Polgardi, Hungary, they argue, but it ended up in Barbariga.

Girardi cited other "evidence": Anton Tkalec often visited Pula, because he had friends there, and in the late 1970s Halim Korban had been to Brioni Island as a moderator at an OPEC meeting being held there. Then Girardi volunteered that Cvek was a weird and unreliable witness. "He repeats the same phrases, sentences, even with the same glimmer in the eye"—as though his tale had been rehearsed. She looked off into the middle distance. "It does sound like a fiction," she suddenly said.

We drove to Barbariga. Modest, modern holiday houses peeked through stands of scrubby trees. No one, not even the Sevso committee, had been permitted to examine the supposed discovery site on the island. Still, Girardi described exactly where the silver had been found, and when I asked her how she knew, she told me that that was what she'd been told. We went to the house where the silver was said to have been stored. It was more a tool shed than a house. We peered in through the chalky windows and saw nothing. An aged man emerged from the house next door, which stood twenty-five feet away, ambled up, and introduced himself as Vilko Kapetanovic. He said he'd lived next to the house since the late 1950s. I asked him if he'd ever seen any silver treasure, and he shook his head. He never saw or heard soldiers or photographers or a secret policeman named Anton Cvek. I asked him if anyone could have come and gone without his knowing, and he smiled and shook his head emphatically. No.

Anton Cvek is now in his early eighties. He is short, stocky, and round-faced. He spends his days drinking and playing cards at a restaurant in Pula on the shore of the Adriatic. I took him to lunch and talked to him for about four hours. His story was polished. It had linearity. Sevso had made him a kind of national hero, and he had been in all the newspapers and on TV. He talked lucidly about why he was the one asked to take the report on the silver. "If you want to keep this thing a secret, call a secret policeman," he said through an interpreter, a Croatian journalist named Branimir Pofuk. I then began to repeat questions, circling back to points he had made earlier. The more he talked, the more specific his answers became. He told me that on June 1, 1961, he had examined the treasure, taken photos, and filed a report.





Marquess of Northampton

On June 6 a yacht belonging to Misha Broz, Tito's son, had transported the silver to the Croatian coastal city of Split. On June 7 the silver had been flown from Split to a town called Motovun, on the Istrian Peninsula. On June 8 Tkalec, who was close to Broz, had flown the silver to London. "This sounds like a fairy tale," Cvek admitted. "Who could make this up?" Cvek then volunteered that he'd known Tkalec personally, from the 1950s, and that they'd gone to school together—but there is a difference of three decades in their ages. And Motovun, I knew, was a tiny medieval village that sits astride a hill. The only things that land and take off from Motovun are birds. And then, unsolicited, Cvek told me that Tkalec had flown the silver to London on Northampton's plane, and that Northampton himself was the pilot. Pofuk and I exchanged looks. Cvek sat wearing an expression of self-importance. Did he realize, I asked, that in 1961 Northampton had been fifteen years old? I didn't wait for a reply. I turned to Pofuk and said, "I'll get the check."

Until the conclusion of the New York trial, Croatia government officials had been committed to claiming the treasure. Whoever or whatever lay behind Anton Cvek's story, it certainly reflected a fledgling nation's hunger for a national identity. I heard rumors that in 1992 Northampton had offered to give Croatia either \$85 million or one or two pieces of the treasure, gratis, if the Croatians would walk away from their claim. Officials in Zagreb wouldn't talk about that. The story itself might have been planted to bolster Croatia's credibility, and so undermine Hungary's. Dick Ellis told me that Scotland Yard detectives watched a video of Cvek testifying about how big the Sevso plates were, in which he held up his hands about a foot and a half apart. The detectives, Ellis told me, broke out in laughter.

IX.

Back in London, I went to see Andy Sellers, the head of the Sevso operation, at his small, dingy office at New Scotland Yard. Sellers, in his late forties, is young for his rank. He is tall and plainspoken, with a military bearing, a street cop more comfortable with armed robbers than with anyone or anything relating to art. He was obviously the last man on earth with whom Van Rijn could do business. At the mere mention of Van Rijn's name Sellers's jaw tightened, his hands clenched his chair, and he shook his head slowly, as if talking himself out of saying something he would regret.

Sellers told me that from the beginning of the Sevso operation he had disliked Van Rijn. He thought him "a manipulative dilettante." Sellers was aware of Van Rijn's reputation—that he'd informed for Scotland Yard for years, and for the French police, the Carabinieri, and the FBI, all the while cutting his own side deals, ratting on the operations of rivals, and then filling the voids he had created. But Van Rijn was the Yard's sole source of information on Sevso, and Felice Cultrera was its only possible approach to Tkalec. "But we risk-assessed it," Sellers told me, "and the other side of it was the Hungarians' expectation, and the sheer value of this commodity." There was also the pathos of the story of Jozsef Sumegh to consider, and the purity of the Hungarians' passion.

Then he told me what had happened in Zurich.

On October 27 Van Rijn and Cultrera met Sellers and two other Yard detectives in Zurich. They collectively decided that Cultrera would meet Tkalec at noon and take him out to a restaurant. They allowed two hours for the lunch, after which they'd reconvene and debrief. But given what he knew about Van Rijn, Sellers had pre-arranged for a Swiss surveillance team to secretly shadow Cultrera.

Three o'clock came and went, and Sellers had heard nothing from Cultrera. Then the Swiss called and reported that Cultrera had gone to Tkalec's office at

noon, stayed for only twenty minutes, and then returned to his hotel, and he hadn't left since. Sellers immediately called Van Rijn and said that he wanted to meet right away. When the group was all together, Cultrera told Sellers that everything had gone according to plan, that he'd been with Tkalec for forty-five minutes, and that Tkalec had talked openly about the Sevso silver and was ready to deal. Cultrera also said that Tkalec wanted to give him a photograph of the silver so that there would be no doubt what they were talking about. He would return to Tkalec's office the next morning to pick it up.

The next day Swiss surveillance picked up Cultrera's trail outside his hotel. But instead of meeting Tkalec at his office to get the photograph, as he'd told Sellers he'd do, Cultrera drove straight to the airport hotel where he was to meet the British detectives before his flight home. Cultrera told Sellers that he'd met with Tkalec at his office, as planned. He then handed the detective the photograph that Tkalec had supposedly given him. "When we had a look at this photograph," Sellers said, "we saw it's a laser copy. It looks like a photograph of part of Northampton's [portion of the treasure]. So we now know that FC is giving us bullshit. We're already smelling a rat. FC says he's in a hurry, I've got things to do. FC flew off happy."

Later that day Sellers shared a cab to the airport with Van Rijn. Van Rijn chattered excitedly about the progress they'd made, and how the sting was going better than expected. Sellers listened patiently and then turned and confronted him, telling him bitterly that he'd had surveillance on Cultrera the entire time, and that he knew the Yard was being set up. Sellers was seething. Van Rijn seemed devastated. "If it was an act, it was a good act, of total devastation and surprise," Sellers told me. "The rest of the trip to the airport he's silent and quiet. When we get to the airport, he pulls me to one side and says, Look, about a month ago FC suggested that we try to have you over, and we have a copy of the silver made, and we'll do the switch, and you'll seize the copies, and the Mafia will make copies of the real commodity, and you'll be left looking like a bunch of prats." Van Rijn said he'd tried to convince Cultrera that they had to stick with the Yard's plan, and thought he'd won him over, but obviously Cultrera was having him over as well. According to Sellers, Van Rijn then said, "Look, we'll work together and we will shaft FC. If you let me get back into him, and say all right, let's fucking shaft the police, I'll find out exactly what the plan is, because if the silver's going to be copied, Tkalec's going to have to give it up, and if we know where it's going, and I think I know the silversmith in Seville who'll do the copying, if I know it's there, you can arrange for the Spanish police to seize it, and job done."

Two months later Van Rijn's lawyer sent Scotland Yard a fax terminating his cooperation in all ongoing operations, including Sevso. The reason Van Rijn gave me was that the Yard had put his life—and his family's lives—in danger by reneging on a promise to protect him. He also says that the Yard left him vulnerable to criminal prosecution in France by exposing him as a participating informant in a case involving smuggled bronze statues. The police later told me that although they had installed alarms in Van Rijn's London townhouse, and had offered him a place in the witness-protection program, he continued to send faxes all over the world announcing that he knew of various plots to buy and sell stolen art and antiquities. "I was going to offer him a change of identity, but I knew that it would be a waste of time," Dick Ellis says. "Within six months Van Rijn would resurface as himself, in his striped shirts and plaid blazers and flowery ascot."

A more likely explanation of Van Rijn's withdrawal of cooperation is that his vanity couldn't recover from the humiliation of having been outwitted in Zurich by the likes of Andy Sellers.

Northampton called Tkalec in Zurich, wanting to know where the silver had come from. Tkalec's "reaction was to say that I was mad to want to know where it had come from," Northampton said in a statement to the British police in 1990.

For two weeks after the meeting at the Budapest Hilton, Hajdu-Bankuti phoned Van Rijn repeatedly to see how he and Cultrera were progressing, but he didn't return her calls. Instead, just before Christmas, he called Anton Tkalec. They had two conversations. In the first, Van Rijn says, Tkalec offered him a partnership in the silver, so that they could double cross the Hungarians. (I asked to hear that tape, but Van Rijn told me that his recorder had, in this one case, malfunctioned.) In the second conversation, which I did hear, Tkalec's hostility toward Van Rijn was manifest. Tkalec said he had spoken to his lawyer and wasn't interested in talking about the Sevso silver anymore. He and Van Rijn had nothing more to talk about. Then he wished him a Happy New Year and hung up. Van Rijn had eliminated any chance that Tkalec could be surprised by anything at all. He had sabotaged the entire operation.

Meanwhile, I asked Hajdu-Bankuti why her government did not merely buy back the silver.

"It doesn't sound good in the international market to buy back something that went out illegally," she replied. "And the connection with the murder—there were three deaths around it."

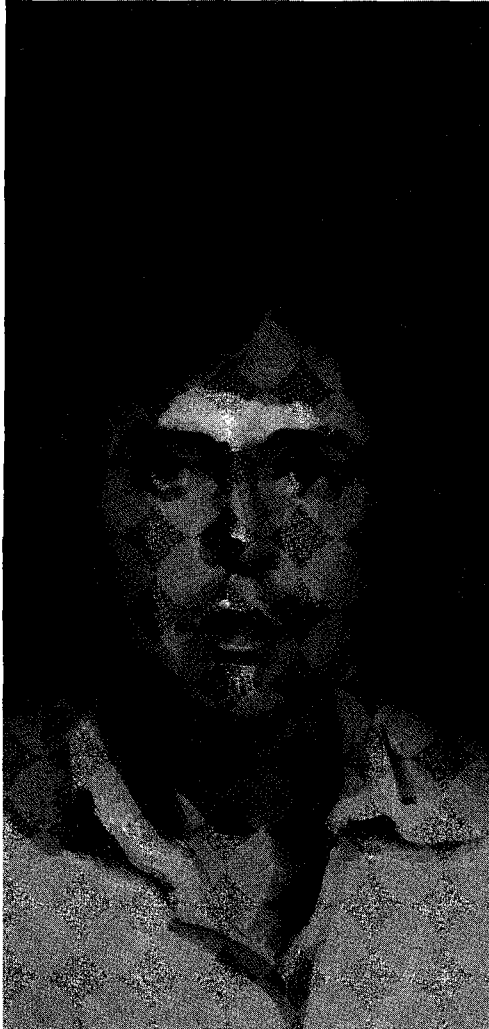
I finally called Cultrera himself. He was astonished that this was anyone else's topic of conversation. "This is reality. This isn't a movie, you know," he told me darkly. The day before I called, Van Rijn had told him that Scotland Yard was publicly talking about his participation in the failed sting. Actually, the Yard wasn't—but Van Rijn was.

"How can they talk about something as delicate as that?" Cultrera said. "I risk my life, and they are like that. They are stupid ... They come to me to help for the situation. I am for justice." In what had become for me a litany of denials, Cultrera told me that he never suggested kidnapping Tkalec or had any intention of forging any of the treasure.

When Dick Ellis learned what Van Rijn had been up to with the Hungarians, he was appalled. The whole point, after all, had been to seize the silver in Tkalec's possession, go after Northampton's in the courts, reunite the hoard, and put it on display in the national museum in Budapest, for all of Hungary—and the world—to see. "If they have recovered the silver in the back of a car after paying for it, and Tkalec is covered with black eyes or worse, you're not going to be able to evidence the silver, or maybe link it to the other hoard," Ellis told me. "The Hungarians have to be able to produce evidence and present it to a court and a judge to prove that Northampton's silver rightfully belongs to them."

After I met with Sellers, I sat in a pub around the corner from New Scotland Yard with a detective friend, a man with a keen street intuition and without an agenda. Police officers can get close to the animal angles that lie beneath—and sometimes undercut—intellectual reason. They often come around to the idea that the solutions to most mysteries are simple, if not mundane. The more convoluted the case, the more probable this is. This detective planted his flag in plainness. We drank, ruminating on Van Rijn ("There are those who wouldn't mind seeing him at the bottom of a river," the detective said, only half joking), on Tkalec ("nasty piece of work"), and on the Sevso treasure. At some point he fell silent, pointed at me with his finger, and squinted. "Have you ever considered the possibility," he said reflectively, "that there *is* no more silver? That what Northampton has is basically the whole lot, except the one piece we know about that Tkalec has? And that all this—the sting, everything—has been for *nothing*?"

I thought about what Van Rijn—or anyone else, for that matter—actually knew to be true about the remainder of the treasure. I knew of at least one more



Anton Tkalec

extraordinary plate, with an engraved Chi-Rho in the center. Tkalec himself had disclosed its existence by having its image published on the cover of an auction catalogue. I'd heard strong rumors and descriptions of another plate, called the Constantine Plate. But who had actually laid eyes on Tkalec's treasure? Who had held it? The answer, as far as I knew, was no one. Except, of course, the enigmatic Tkalec himself. And then it struck me that maybe the reason Van Rijn hadn't followed through with the sting or the kidnapping plot was that he couldn't, because despite the time and the money invested, there was no more treasure—and he had known it all along.

"Just a thought," the detective said.

XI.

I eventually made contact with Tkalec myself. He spoke to me by phone from Zurich, and from his country house in Thessaloniki, on a number of occasions, and we developed a strange, dueling rapport, in which he would alternately try to intimidate me with dark threats and talk to me openly about his love of antiquities, and of history itself.

He told me that he didn't have the silver—that Northampton's half is all there ever was. "You tell me what you're missing, and I'll tell you what I have," he said, laughing. (An impossible task, it seems, because the only people to have seen the remaining silver, if there is any, are either dead or in the mute chain of dealers.) But one London dealer, who asked to remain anonymous, told me he had seen the inveterate British antiquities collector George Ortiz looking the silver over in Zurich. And Dick Ellis says that Ortiz once bragged to him that he had a piece of the Sevso hoard.

On a number of occasions I asked Tkalec if he could identify what country the silver came from. One time he said that he had no idea, that he was only a part of the treasure's chain of dealers. Another time he said, "Yes, I can, but I don't want to. Who has to know, knows this." As for Hungary: "They are communists looking for their heritage in places where they never had it." About the possible existence of plots to kidnap and entrap him, Tkalec sounded curious and amused. I asked him if he knew Felice Cultrera. He said he didn't. I said Cultrera was allegedly linked to the Santapaolo Mafia. Tkalec said, "The oldish guy who came to me? He was Mickey Mouse." As for Scotland Yard, he said, "They're like Dr. Watson and the other guy ... Sherlock Holmes, that's it, that's it. They have this complex and they want to prove it to the world. It's in their blood. They are a bunch of assholes, excuse me ... Van Rijn is a creep ... He's trying to make some money. He was a kind of playboy. He's not my world. All over the world he was involved in all kinds of funny stories. I'm a hard worker. I work eighteen hours a day. This man never worked more than one hour a week." Tkalec confirmed that he had spoken to Van Rijn just before Christmas, but not about double crossing the Hungarians.

"If you tell me you'll give me ten million dollars," Tkalec told me, "I'll tell you the full story of Sevso. For ten million dollars I will sell my grandmother. I do not want to make my future on the skeletons of other people ... I will never lie. I may not tell the truth, but I will never lie."

An old friend of Tkalec's had told me that Tkalec is half Jewish. Tkalec asked about my background. I am Jewish—half Hungarian, half Russian. When I told him this, it seemed to give him pause. He seemed to mull it over. After a moment his voice lowered, and he told me to be very Jewish—that Jews don't hurt other Jews. It was half threat, half advice. Then he hung up.

In May of 2000 I flew to Zurich to try to meet him. Bank Leu's coin auction, the numismatic world's biggest and most important annual event, was taking place at a hotel downtown. I knew that Tkalec would be there, and he was. He

**When I asked
people to talk
about Anton Tkalec,
I got the feeling
I was putting a
gun to their heads.
Coin and antiquities
dealers in the
United States and
Europe shrug,
smirk, or wag their
heads when his
name comes up.**

On a number of occasions I asked Tkalec if he could identify what country the silver came from. One time he said that he had no idea, that he was only a part of the treasure's chain of dealers. Another time he said, "Yes, I can, but I don't want to."

didn't know what I looked like, but I knew him from photographs. Tables were arranged in a huge square around the perimeter of the hotel's main ballroom, with an auctioneer at the head. I sat against the wall across from Tkalec, watching him. Ancient coins came and went for tens of thousands of dollars. Many of them were from his collection. I didn't want to embarrass him by approaching him in front of his colleagues. During a break I went downstairs to the lobby and called him on his cell phone. At first he was amused that I was calling. We hadn't spoken for some months. Then I told him where I was. He became supremely unhappy. He growled that he would never meet me. We argued. After the auction I waited outside his office, along the fashionable Limmatquai, to catch him in private. He called me on my cell phone. He told me that he knew I was there waiting for him, and that he'd never come, and I'd never find him, and we'd never speak again.

XII.

In the town of Szabadbattyán, Hungary, about a mile and a half from the spot where Jozsef Sumegh is thought to have found the copper cauldron, lie the recently discovered ruins of an enormous two-story Roman villa. The remains of four Roman soldiers were found crushed beneath a collapsed floor. There were also signs of burning. Archaeologists trying to piece together the last moments of the villa's occupants believe that they escaped ahead of a barbarian attack, and that the soldiers stayed behind to defend the homestead. At some point the silver treasure could have been stashed in a hiding place in what is now the Polgardi quarry.

A short drive away, on the southern shores of Lake Balaton, lives Jozsef Sumegh's brother, Ishtevan, in a house behind a restaurant he owns. He is twenty-nine, a big, cheerful man who turns somber and quiet when Sevso is brought up. The story he tells is harrowing. He says that at one point Jozsef sent him and their other brother, Atilla, for sandpaper, and that they used it to clean off one of the pieces of silver. He is convinced that the military was involved in his brother's death. Both Russian and Hungarian officers visited Jozsef after he found the treasure. "During the 1980s," Ishtevan told me through an interpreter, "there was no way whatsoever for a simple person to take anything across the border." He also remembers that a peasant family in Polgardi was interested not in the silver pieces but in the copper cauldron, to make the local brew. Jozsef showed it to them, but it was too oxidized for use.

In 1980, Ishtevan said, Jozsef and their mother had a screaming match, which he remembers clearly. His mother complained that Jozsef wanted to sell the treasure too cheap, piece by piece, rather than holding out to sell the whole thing for a huge sum. Not long afterward Jozsef was dead, and the treasure was gone. Ten years later, when Ishtevan was seventeen, he and Atilla were jailed for stealing a car. They happened to be paroled just as Northampton was gearing up to sell the treasure through Sotheby's. Ishtevan told me that his mother met him and his brother outside the prison and said that they had to defect immediately, that their lives were in danger because of what they knew about the treasure. She had arranged to have them smuggled out. If they had been caught, the penalties would have been heavy. At the Hungarian border she told them, "I will never see you again, but when I die I am going to leave a good-bye letter that will tell everything I know about the treasure." Ishtevan and Atilla left for Spain. Two weeks later their mother was found dead on the lawn in front of their house. The official cause of death was an accidental fall and blow to the head, but her husband told Ishtevan that this was inaccurate—she had just collapsed and died. A family friend says she posted a letter two weeks before she died, but nothing is known about this letter, if indeed it was written.

Just before I left, Ishtevan asked me how much the treasure was worth. I wrote in my notebook, "\$200 million." Ishtevan stared at the figure with indifference. Then he took the pen out of my hand and wrote underneath, "2 life."

Michel van Rijn remains in Tenerife. Occasionally, he says, he goes underground, and when he does, he calls from cell phones, and e-mails through the accounts of friends. But he now appears less romantic knight than nervous refugee. Of course he has people to answer to now, people with resources: the British government, the Hungarians, his old friend Felice Cultrera, whom he has exposed as a police informant. If Cultrera does have links to the Santapaola family hierarchy in Sicily, this may not sit well with them. Van Rijn told me that Cultrera has been hunting for him. Try as he might, Van Rijn cannot account for himself. He wears the mantle of professional rogue proudly, testifying against himself with relish, not confessing so much as taking credit for his ruses and crimes.

The Sevso silver is out of the world's reach. Northampton's stash, I have been led to believe, sits in wooden boxes in a vault on one of the Channel Islands; Tkalec's is most likely in a bank in Zurich. Scotland Yard will not comment on whether or not Tkalec holds any of the treasure.

XIII.

One night last June, I was waiting in a dingy hotel room in Belgrade for a phone call from Anton Tkalec's friend and former partner, Victor Ristovic. Earlier in the day Ristovic had said he would call to arrange a meeting to discuss Tkalec and the Sevso treasure. At 9:00 P.M. the phone rang. But it wasn't Ristovic. The man on the line wouldn't say who he was. His voice was deep and gravelly—and familiar, though I couldn't place it. During random pauses I could hear him draw on a cigarette. He introduced himself simply as a guy who knew Anton Tkalec, and said he was prepared to vouch absolutely for Tkalec's honor and integrity. Tkalec, he said, would never get involved in anything illegal. He staked his life on it.

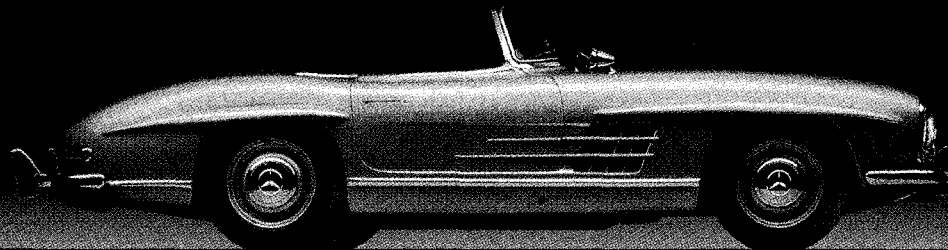
He said that he'd been informed that an American journalist was in town asking questions about the Sevso silver. He didn't know my name. Then he said, "Do you know who is this? This is Anton Tkalec." When I told him who I was, he paused, sucked in his breath, and said, "Fuck you. You're in my home town. Do you think if I wanted something to happen to you, you'd be okay for three minutes? Fuck you." Then he hung up. I turned to Branimir Pofuk, who was serving again as my interpreter. Pofuk was sitting on the bed, transfixed. I said to him, "Start packing. We're leaving. Tonight."

Five minutes later Tkalec called me back, and we spoke for two hours. He was bitter and frustrated. I wanted to persuade him to tell me the truth, and he wanted to convince me that he was innocent. "I am involved with Sevso from the beginning," he said, "but I'm one of the chain. It came from me. But I assure you, on the lives of my children and the holy grave of my father, I had the treasure for twenty-two hours. I am a person of honor, not a garbage man. I was inside, and couldn't step out. It was too late for me." I wanted to know who had sold it to him. He paused. He seemed to consider the question. Finally he said, apologetically, "I can't reveal the person."

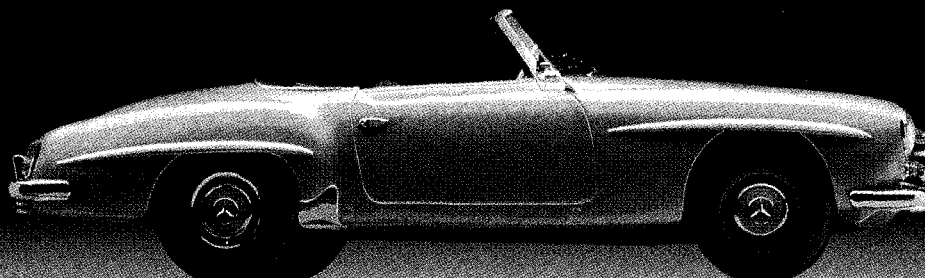
Later he said, "If you are looking for the holes where the Sevso treasure came from, you will never find them. You will never find the truth in Yugoslavia. You will never find any truth in that country, about anything." Tkalec broke into throaty, rueful laughter. Then he instantly sobered. I could hear him breathing on the other end of the line. "I will be a barrier between you and the truth, a dam. It's the end of the story. If you keep coming after me, I'm going to fuck your soul." Then he was gone. ▀



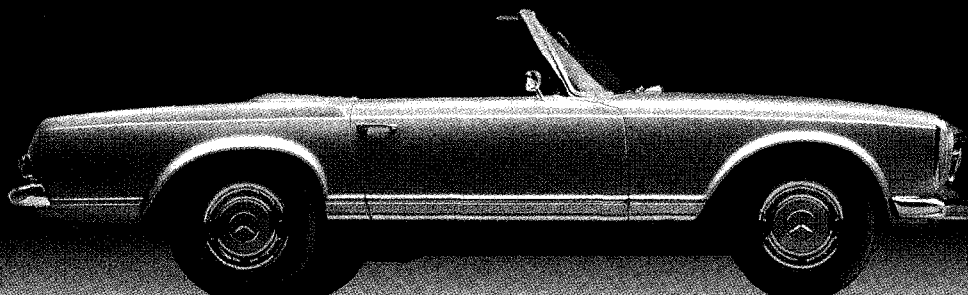
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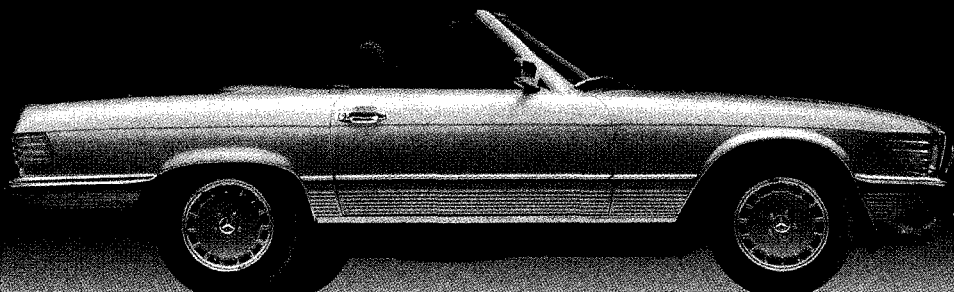
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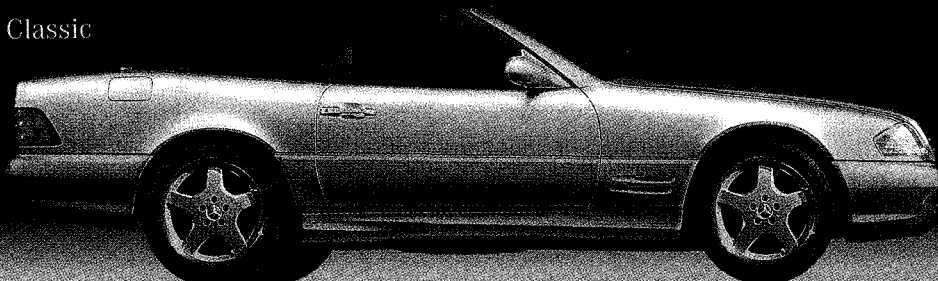
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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF *THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR*

The conservative magazine survived and prospered for twenty-five years before Bill Clinton came into its sights. Now the former President is rich and smiling, and the Spectator is dead

BY BYRON YORK

Illustration by Steve Brodner

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One Friday afternoon last July, Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, the No. 2 man at *The American Spectator* for twenty years, from its time as a small-circulation conservative intellectual review through its run as the shouting voice of anti-Clintonism, rummaged through the magazine's shut-down office in Arlington, Virginia, cleaning out his desk before movers arrived, on Monday, to cart everything away. The *Spectator* had been sold nearly a year earlier to the high-tech guru George Gilder, who, in changing the magazine to a journal of the New Economy, decided to fire the staff and move the operation to his headquarters, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Now it was time for the old office to be shut down, and Pleszczynski was getting ready to go. Dressed in shorts and sandals, he stopped every now and then to answer the phone; friends wanted to know if Wlady, as everyone called him, was okay. (I was a writer for the magazine from 1996 to 2000, and had dropped by that day for the same reason.) Never much of an optimist even in good times, Pleszczynski answered that he was fine, considering the circumstances.

In the hallway outside his office rows and rows of tiny nails were sticking in the wall where dozens of photos from long-ago *Spectator* parties had hung. Most of the pictures on the wall facing Pleszczynski's office were from the magazine's tenth-anniversary celebration, in 1977, at the St. Regis Hotel, in New York. At that time it was still possible to gather nearly every conservative writer in America in one room (actually, it still is, although one would need a slightly larger room), and the *Spectator* had drawn an impressive crowd. Around the candlelit tables were William F. Buckley and Tom Wolfe and Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol and William Safire and, of course, R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., the man who founded the *Spectator* as an anti-radical rag on the campus of Indiana University in 1967.

Tyrrell would be coming in that Friday night to clean out his stuff. Just outside his office was a Royal typewriter from the 1920s. Ever since the Indiana days the typewriter had sat

on a table in front of a life-size black-suited papier-mâché dummy of H. L. Mencken, Tyrrell's idol, made by the artist Tim Moynihan, son of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, another Tyrrell hero. Stacks of files and office trash sat around the typewriter on that Friday. Lying haphazardly on top of a throwaway pile was a copy of the *Spectator's* January, 1994, issue, with the British artist John Springs's caricature of Bill Clinton tiptoeing away from a house after a late-night romantic tryst. The headline was "HIS CHEATIN' HEART: DAVID BROCK IN LITTLE ROCK." This was the Troopergate story, the piece that exposed Clinton's extramarital dalliances while he was the governor of Arkansas. It had caused the President much embarrassment when it was published and had started a chain of events that eventually led to the Paula Jones lawsuit and Clinton's impeachment. In the process it made the magazine famous, increasing its circulation and income more than anyone could ever have imagined. And it did one other thing: it destroyed *The American Spectator*.

How that happened is the story of a magazine that was very, very good for most of its life—for years it was one of the few outlets for first-rate conservative writers, and almost every prominent conservative writer today contributed to it at some time or another—but that in the 1990s lost touch with what had made it so good. A few conservatives—Tyrrell was prominent among them—became possessed by a self-destructive brand of opposition to Bill Clinton, and in their desire to knock the President out of office they ended up hurting themselves more than him. What at first appeared to be an enormous success—after Troopergate the *Spectator* was a very hot magazine—led to unexpected and calamitous consequences. There was the "Arkansas Project," a \$2.4 million effort, financed by the right-wing philanthropist Richard Mellon Scaife, to uncover wrongdoing in Clinton's past, which ultimately led to the investigation of the *Spectator* itself. There was financial ruin, brought about by the magazine's almost naive inability to handle its new wealth. And there was the downfall of Tyrrell, a talented polemicist

who craved acceptance in the world of Washington but allowed his obsession with Clinton to ensure that he would become increasingly alienated from that world. For a moment the men who ran *The American Spectator* believed that it could transcend the limits—small circulation, small budget, an influence limited to elite readers—that define magazines of its type. But in the end the mistakes they made in the flush of success proved that it could not.

THE ANTI-RADICAL RADICAL

Bob Tyrrell (R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. was his by-line, never how he was known to friends) came from a Chicago family, attended Catholic school in the suburb of Oak Park, and went to college at Indiana University. At first attracted to the school for its athletic program (he was a promising swimmer), Tyrrell later shifted his focus to academics, graduating in 1965 with a degree in history and staying on in Bloomington to attend graduate school.

Unlike many other conservatives, Tyrrell never went through a left-wing period in his youth. He was always a conservative, but his was a libertarian, latitudinarian, literary kind of conservatism. He wanted to have a smart, dandyish style; he particularly admired the writing and style of Mencken and of magazines from the 1920s and 1930s such as *The American Mercury*, *The Smart Set*, and the original *American Spectator*. When Tyrrell looked around in the 1960s for the kind of fools, frauds, and deluded idealists whom Mencken would have debunked, he found them on the left.

Tyrrell believed that the student left in Bloomington had overwhelmed the right; conservatives on campus, he felt, could not begin to counter the left's political power. "Indiana University was the first major campus to become dominated by an SDS student government," he recalls, referring to the radical Students for a Democratic Society. "They were new left, hard left. We opposed them. They had their magazine—oddly enough, it was called *The Spectator*—and we needed a magazine." So Tyrrell created one, which he called *The Alternative*. The first cover, in September of 1967, featured the fuselage and wings of a B-52 bomber inside a circle to form the shape of a peace sign; the cover said simply, "DROP IT." The magazine's twelve pages were filled with reprints of pieces by Barry Goldwater and Milton Friedman, plus writings by Tyrrell, who gave himself the grand title of editor in chief. Later issues offered more of the same. Tyrrell would denounce campus leftists—"a second-rate intellectual and a full-time sissy," he called one, in characteristic style—and throw jabs at the idols of youth culture. "The Insects have interrupted a trend of lyrical

tommyrot and recorded several acceptable yodelings," he wrote in a review of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, "but for the most part the civilized ear will remain wondering if the album's grooves circle in the right way."

But Tyrrell wanted to be more than just a writer and an editor. From the beginning he saw *The Alternative* as part of a movement, something that would one day become a political force on campus and beyond. Along with John Von Kannon and Ron Burr, friends who served at different times as publisher of the magazine, Tyrrell supported conservative candidates for student office, staged events for conservative speakers (Buckley, a god in their circle, came for a few visits), and endeavored to create a wider conservative culture that would ultimately change the direction of the university. His method of choice was mockery, making fun of the left's seriousness and appropriating its methods to create a sort of right-wing absurdist, radical-style agitprop.

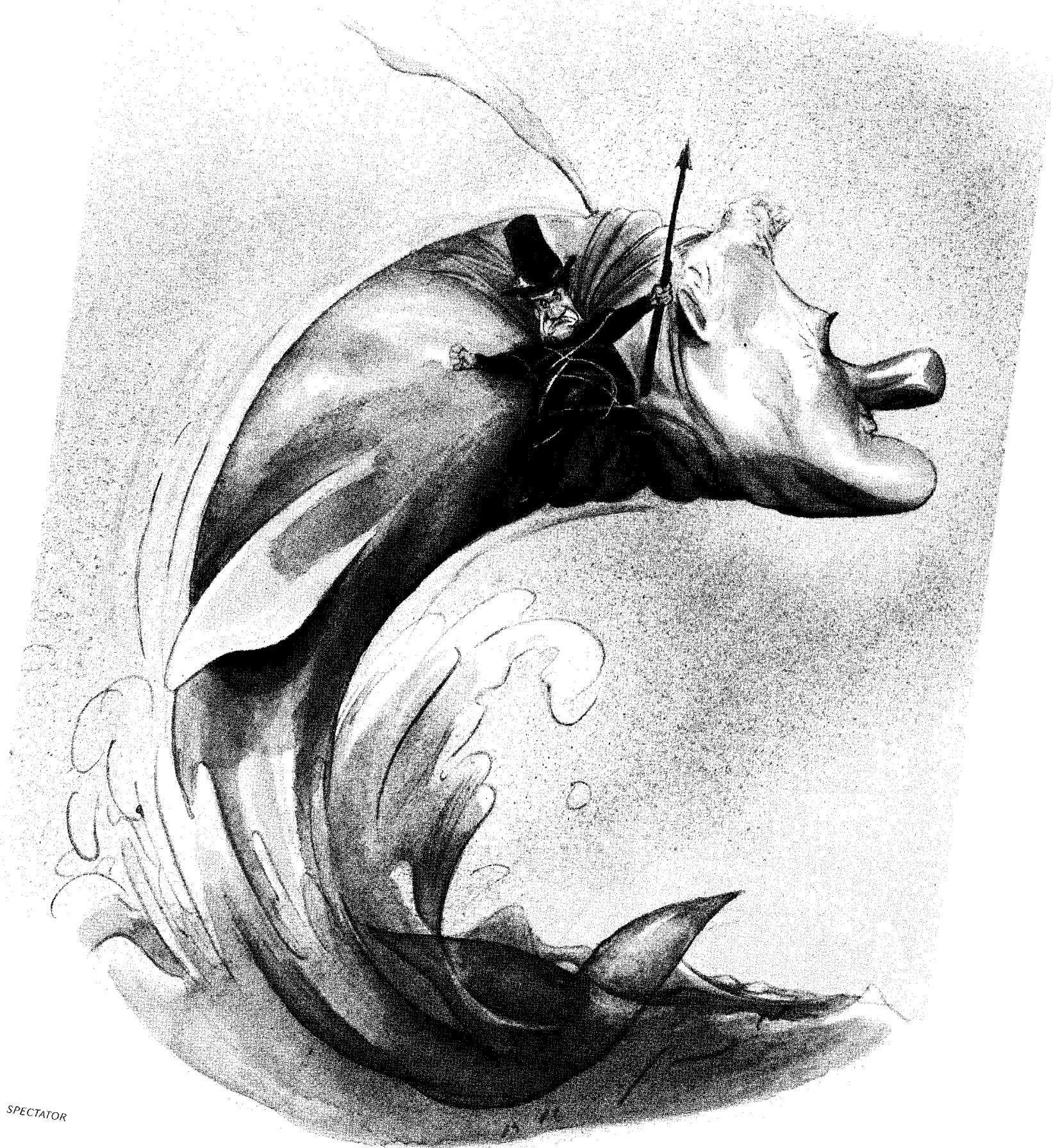
In late 1969, for example, Tyrrell organized a "conservative teach-in" on campus and invited William Rusher and Frank Meyer, of Buckley's *National Review*, to debate liberal IU professors. Tyrrell himself arranged to debate one Dr. Rudolph Montag, a professor at Columbia University,

on the subject of "The Social Problem." No one in the audience knew it, but Dr. Rudolph Montag and his impressive résumé were the creation of Tyrrell and Von Kannon, who recruited a fellow student to play the professor. On stage Tyrrell sparred with Montag, who

Tyrrell's method of choice was making fun of the left's seriousness and appropriating its methods to create a sort of right-wing, absurdist, radical-style agitprop.

mouthed liberal platitudes until a spectator in the audience—a member of the wrestling team put up to it by *The Alternative*—stood up, called Montag "a goddamned Communist," and threw a pie in his face. Montag, offered a towel by a sober-faced *Alternative* staff member, stayed in character and lamented the tensions on campus that led to such acts of violence. It was all a marvelous send-up, but it nevertheless attracted serious coverage in the campus newspaper. "We had had events for a couple of years and never got any attention at all," Tyrrell recalls, "so we decided to have this bogus pie-throwing, and overnight we got a huge amount of attention." The lesson wasn't lost on Tyrrell: one could get a lot of mileage out of ridiculing one's enemies.

But attention didn't necessarily make a magazine successful, and *The Alternative* was chronically low on money. At first Tyrrell, Von Kannon, and Burr got along with cash from a few local supporters and the national conservative group Young Americans for Freedom. But early on, facing the immediate prospect of going broke, Tyrrell asked the widow of the pharmaceutical magnate Eli Lilly for a contribution. She sent \$3,000 and offered to give much more if the magazine could be set up as a charitable foundation,



SPECTATOR

which would make her contributions tax-deductible. On her advice Tyrrell incorporated *The Alternative* as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charity, which the magazine remained until Gilder bought it, more than thirty years later. For all those years individual contributions to *The Alternative* and, later, to *The American Spectator* were fully tax-deductible. (Although it seems a peculiarity of the tax code that a political magazine could qualify as a charity, the liberal *American Prospect* and *Mother Jones* both have 501(c)(3) status.)

The extra Lilly dollars brought in by the magazine's change in status helped to secure *The Alternative's* future. And shortly thereafter Tyrrell attracted the attention of the foundation that would become the magazine's most generous benefactor. In 1970 a man named Richard Larry, who had just started work at the charitable trusts controlled by Richard Mellon Scaife, received a call from a friend in Indianapolis. "He said, 'Dick, there's an outfit in Bloomington that you really ought to take a look at,'" Richard Larry recalls. "The campuses were in uproar, the left was in its glory, and here was *The Alternative*, taking on these people and their ideas in a way that nobody else at the time, at least that we were aware of, was doing—with humor and sarcasm. It was having some effect on the campus there in Indiana, and we felt that it could have a broader impact." Scaife gave *The Alternative* a grant of \$25,000, an enormous sum for a young magazine at the time. The foundation's support gave Tyrrell and his group the means they needed to reach beyond Indiana University.

THE PERFECT LIFE

In May of 1970, strengthened by Scaife's money, *The Alternative* made its debut in larger, tabloid size, with a more professional design and articles by a wider variety of writers. Tyrrell, Von Kannon, and Burr undertook to make it a regional campus magazine, hoping to distribute 30,000 free copies at colleges around the Midwest. Later, the plan went, *The Alternative* would become a national campus monthly.

As the magazine expanded, Tyrrell spent much of his time cultivating conservative intellectuals and the group of disaffected liberals who would become known as neoconservatives. Tyrrell wrote them letters introducing himself and his magazine, asking them for advice, articles, and support. Milton Friedman, Ernest van den Haag, Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook, Herbert Stein, Edward Banfield, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, Irving Kristol—all were on the receiving end of the young Tyrrell's appeals. "They were charmed by his hijinks, flattered by his attention, and impressed by his seriousness," recalls Adam Meyerson, who joined the magazine in 1974 after finishing a senior thesis at Yale on Adam Smith and Edmund Burke. "They would share their ideas and their brightest protégés with him." They shared something else, too—their children. Tyrrell cultivated conservative kids as well as parents. The precocious William

Kristol began writing for the magazine while he was still in his teens; so did his sister Elizabeth. Elliott Banfield, Edward's son, did much of *The Alternative's* artwork. Ben Stein, son of the economist Herbert Stein, began a long-running association with the magazine. Later Naomi Decter and John Podhoretz would also make the trek to Bloomington.

Tyrrell was cross-generational; born in 1943, he was eighteen years younger than Buckley and ten to fifteen years older than some of his writers—and he could appeal to both. *The Alternative* kept picking up talent. In October of 1971 it published the first "Letter From a Whig," a column by its new Washington correspondent, George F. Will, who was then a Senate aide. The young—and nonconservative—Roger Rosenblatt also contributed essays. As it gained credibility among the neocons, the magazine began publishing serious pieces by people like Roger Starr, Elliott Abrams, James Q. Wilson, Harvey Mansfield, Michael Novak, and others. "It had big ambitions and a sense of tilting against a majority culture that was either amusingly stupid or dangerously wrong," says Erich Eichman, now an editor at *The Wall Street Journal*, who joined the magazine in 1977.

The Alternative also had a kind of Bloomington cachet for intellectuals who lived in the East. "Part of its charm, part of its attraction, was that it was coming out of this college town in the Midwest," recalls Steven Munson, who came to Tyrrell's magazine from Irving Kristol's *The Public Interest* in 1977. "It was of the New York intellectual world, but not in it." *The Alternative* had its headquarters in a farmhouse outside Bloomington that was known as The Establishment, where visitors who came to meet the magazine's staff would spend the night. It was a notably downscale experience; the rooms were a wreck and the bathroom was in the hideous, scum-brown condition common in some college quarters. "Pat Moynihan and Bill Buckley both had the same reaction when they walked in there," Von Kannon recounted in a 1980s magazine article. "They walked right back out and took a leak off the front porch."

The Alternative changed its name in 1974. Worried that a conservative journal had a title that harked back to sixties counterculture, Tyrrell changed it first to *The Alternative: An American Spectator*, and then, in 1977, to *The American Spectator*. In a note that ran for years beneath the magazine's masthead he wrote, "By November 1977 the word 'alternative' had acquired such an esoteric fragrance that in order to discourage unsolicited manuscripts from florists, beauticians, and other creative types, [we] reverted to the magazine's original name." It was classic Tyrrell, amusing to his fans and offensive to others—and a put-on as well, since *The American Spectator* wasn't really the magazine's original name but, rather, a bit of Tyrrell fiction to connect his publication to its 1930s model.

Although the *Spectator* could never be described as flush with cash, its increasing prominence helped to pull in more contributions. Scaife's grants increased during this time,

and so did those from the Lilly Endowment. The South Carolina textile magnate Roger Milliken was another big supporter, as was Henry Salvatori, the California oil baron who was a close adviser to Ronald Reagan. "You put them together and you've got probably ninety percent of the contributions budget from that time," says Von Kannon, who took care of most fundraising duties. (He is now a top official at the conservative Heritage Foundation.) That was also the lion's share of the magazine's budget; its circulation hovered around 20,000, and its advertising revenues never amounted to much. Like other political journals, the *Spectator* depended—and would always depend—on the generosity of a few wealthy and like-minded individuals and foundations.

As did Tyrrell himself. Although the rest of the staff earned little, he received a substantial salary (determined by his hand-picked board of directors), and the Lilly Endowment paid for part of his house in Bloomington. The magazine's tax-exempt parent—the Alternative Educational Foundation, later The American Spectator Educational Foundation—paid for his membership in the New York Athletic Club, where he stayed during his increasingly frequent magazine-funded visits to Manhattan. (Later it would rent a small apartment for him on the Upper East Side.) And it paid for Tyrrell's trips to London, where he would stay at Brown's Hotel, buy suits on Savile Row, and lunch with his favorite British writers, Malcolm Muggeridge and Peregrine Worsthorne.

"Tom Wolfe once said that Bob had cultivated the perfect life," says Andrew Ferguson, a writer who joined the magazine in the 1980s, and who is now a columnist for Bloomberg News. "He had his apartment in New York, he could go to Europe when he wanted, and then he could return to this idyllic, perfect little town and do intellectually engaging work."

The magazine's tenth-anniversary party at the St. Regis, with Buckley and Podhoretz and Kristol and Wolfe and everyone else, marked a milestone in Tyrrell's ascent in the conservative world. But it also marked the beginning of his rise in the wider world of mainstream journalism and public affairs. For each issue of the *Spectator*, under the rubric "Public Nuisances," Tyrrell wrote a sketch about a prominent person. His prose was wordy and ornate but also sharp-edged and funny, packing the punch of an old-style broadside. He went after people in politics, literary life, and pop culture, mostly but not exclusively on the left: Jimmy Carter, Bella Abzug, John Kenneth Galbraith, Lillian Hellman, Gore Vidal, Bob Dylan, Henry Kissinger, Walter Mondale, and dozens of others. Nearly every essay was built around a single theme: the subject was a fraud, usually an intellectual poseur, whom Tyrrell was perceptive and brave enough to expose.

Of the President at the time, Tyrrell wrote,

In an earlier era Jimmy Carter of Plains, Georgia, would be devoting himself to procuring his young daughter's first pair of shoes, a bottle of Peruna for a fat wife, and a dusty

flivver for himself. At day's end he would withdraw to the humid coziness of the local Coca-Cola parlor, there to discourse upon the latest intrigues of the Popish camorra and to remain *au courant* with reports of frightening suicide rates experienced by misguided Negroes lured to the Sodoms of the North and taught to read.

Of Vidal, living the exile's life in Ravello, Italy, Tyrrell wrote,

On summer nights the villa fills with the most renowned left-wing intellectuals of the West. In the soft light of the great vaulted living room sit Claire Bloom, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Princess Margaret, and the scholarly Newmans, Joanne and Paul. The talk turns to health care, and Gore laments that our system compares unfavorably with the barber shops of the last Persian empire, one of the few cultures he still admires (he finds it "subtle").

No one else was writing anything quite like that. Tyrrell revised and collected the essays in a book, *Public Nuisances* (1979). His style caught the attention of the late *Washington Post* editorial-page editor Meg Greenfield, who met Tyrrell during a visit to Bloomington. Greenfield, who was greatly pleased with the writing of George F. Will, whom she had brought to the *Post*, was looking for other voices to give the page freshness, and she offered Tyrrell a column.

It was an extraordinary opportunity; not only would his readership expand but his words would be seen by the politicians and policymakers whom he could scarcely have hoped to reach in the past. The opportunity for national recognition stoked Tyrrell's nearly all-consuming ambition. "It was as if he couldn't be satisfied with the kind of success he had achieved in terms of the magazine and its impact and the extraordinary achievement of its alumni," Steven Munson remembers. "It just didn't seem to be enough to do that. He seemed to have this gnawing desire for more." On the eve of the 1980s Tyrrell was on the verge of achieving just that.

LUNCH WITH RON

After the 1980 presidential election it appeared that the *Spectator* would face the problem that eventually confronts every journal of political opinion: What do you do when your guy is in the White House? In the late 1970s the magazine had been brilliant in opposition. Tyrrell eviscerated Jimmy Carter on a regular basis: he ridiculed him, mocked him, and constantly portrayed him as wimpy and humorless and self-righteous. But Ronald Reagan was something else; Tyrrell worshipped the governor of California as much as he loathed Carter.

The *Spectator's* stance toward Reagan is probably best understood in the context of the role Tyrrell envisioned for the magazine at its inception. In 1967 he had wanted *The Alternative* to become part of a political movement, and he believed that conservatives should join together behind a good cause and a good leader. Although Tyrrell was a writer, he had the party operative's sense of loyalty; he sim-

ply didn't understand why some in the conservative camp would take potshots at their own people, why they wouldn't support the cause. As the 1980 election approached, he tried to build a coalition of all conservatives for Reagan.

In the summer of 1978, at the request of one of Reagan's aides, Tyrrell arranged for Reagan to meet a group of mostly neoconservatives—some were still registered Democrats—at the Union League Club, in New York. Although everyone in the group admired Reagan's heartfelt anti-communism, many worried that he was simply too right-wing for them to support. Although assessments of the meeting varied (some remained skeptical; others believed that Reagan had wowed 'em), in the end most of the neocons came around. To the degree that he played a part in the change, Tyrrell deserves credit; it was a genuine achievement to persuade the New York thinkers that Reagan was not some sort of southern-California John Bircher but, rather, a political figure to be taken seriously.

Reagan rewarded Tyrrell with access to the White House, and Tyrrell was thrilled. When he was invited to one of Reagan's early state dinners, in June of 1981, Tyrrell literally worked himself into a fever in his room at the Hay-Adams Hotel as he waited to cross Lafayette Square to the White House. His wife, Judy, who was pregnant with their daughter and had arranged to undergo a cesarean section the week of the dinner, rescheduled the birth so that she could attend. "Annie Tyrrell was a presidential baby," Tyrrell says proudly today. In the East Room, Tyrrell was mesmerized. "It was glittering, and the President was charming," he recalls. "It had all the grace of the Kennedy White House."

Tyrrell later wrote about receiving a call from Reagan in August of 1982. Tyrrell was struggling with a passage he was writing when the phone rang, and a woman told him that the President would like to speak with him. Tyrrell thought someone was kidding him until "the old charmer came on the line, appeasing my irritability as effectively as my nocturnal martini," he wrote. "Literature could be postponed for *les affaires d'etat*." As they talked, Tyrrell suggested that Reagan invite several "like-minded intellectuals" to lunch at the White House—to help in "the establishment of a conservative political counterculture."

Reagan agreed, and Tyrrell organized the group. "We met in the Cabinet Room," he recalls. "We all walked in, and Reagan said, 'Well, Bob, this is your meeting, you sit there,' and he had me sit in the Vice President's chair." As the group ate lunch, Tyrrell urged Reagan to implement conservative proposals on limited government, economic growth, and a strong foreign policy. "Now that was a thrill!" he later wrote. "I had lived to deliver a stirring exhortation to the President of the United States in the privacy of his own home."

In the attic office of his house in Alexandria, Virginia, Tyrrell has carefully stored his correspondence with Reagan. There are letters, encased in clear plastic sheaths, from

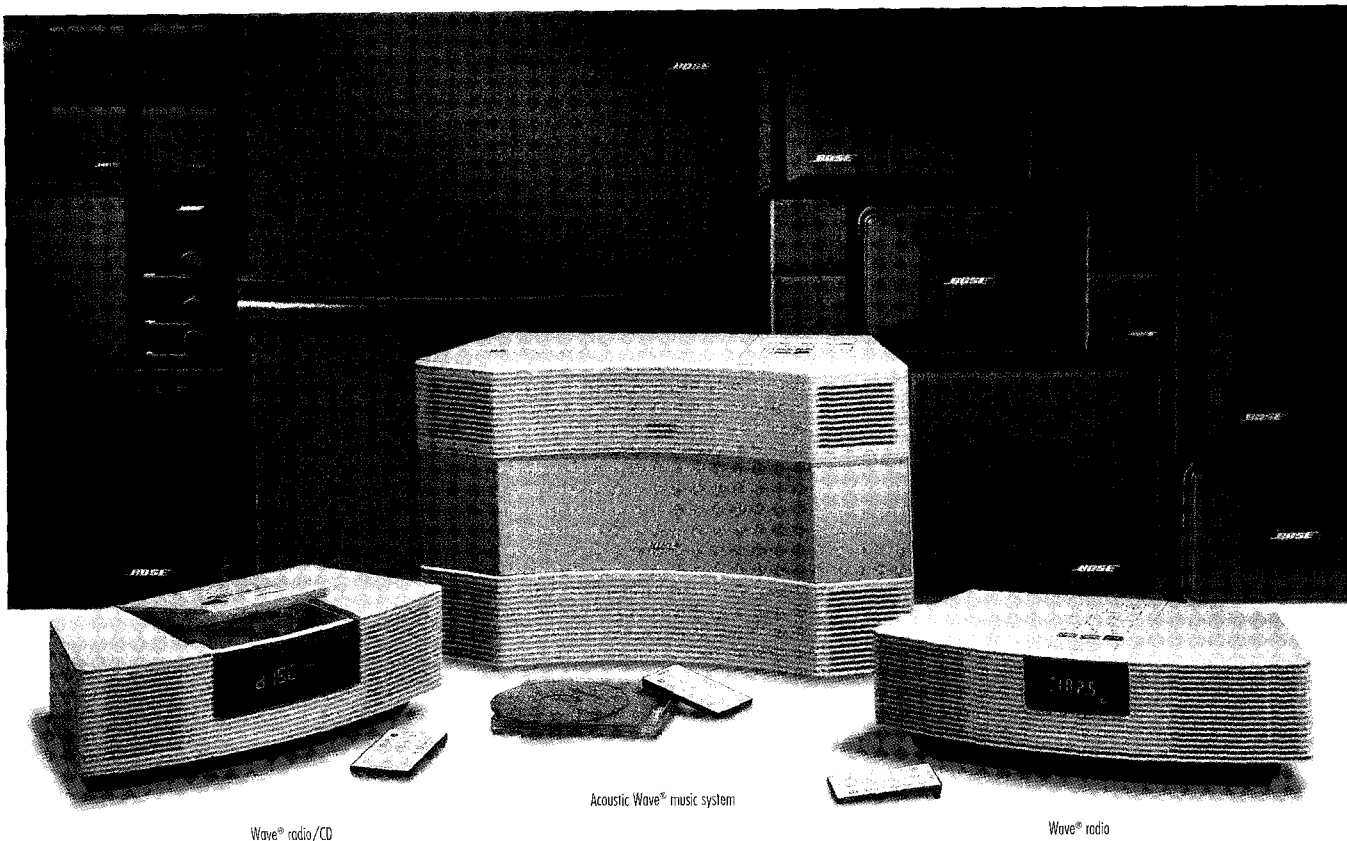
Reagan's years as governor; a fairly thick stack of correspondence from the White House years; and a smaller sheaf of handwritten notes from Reagan's retirement. Some of the letters show the extent to which Tyrrell, when it came to Reagan, simply abandoned the critical stance toward politics that had made the *Spectator* so interesting during its early years. "I ... wonder if there is anything I could do for you," he wrote the President on April 4, 1983. "You are doing a great job, and as you know I want to help you in every way I can." A month later Tyrrell wrote again. "Your speech last Wednesday was superb," he said, "and we shall continue the good fight with you in the pages of the *Spectator* and in my weekly column."

CHICKEN MCMENCKEN

As Tyrrell courted Reagan and wrote the column for the *Post* (he was also syndicated in a few other papers), he devoted little time to actually putting out *The American Spectator*. He had never been a hands-on editor, and in this period there were times when his hands were nowhere near the magazine. Often he did not read articles before they were published; sometimes not even afterward. What made the magazine work was the series of immensely able managing editors Tyrrell hired: Adam Meyerson, Steven Munson, Erich Eichman, and finally, in 1980, Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, who would stay with the *Spectator* for the next twenty years.

But even though the magazine was, as far as Tyrrell was concerned, on autopilot, it remained animated by the spirit he originally brought to it; the *Spectator* still seemed remarkably Tyrrellian even when Tyrrell himself had little to do with it. In the early 1980s it published lengthy musings on martinis and second wives along with analyses of communism and the arts. In 1981 the editors were particularly proud of—and Tyrrell was actually involved in—the former National Security Council aide Peter Rodman's detailed rebuttal of William Shawcross's *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*. They were even happier when Shawcross submitted an equally detailed defense of his argument. His response meant that the *Spectator's* conservatives weren't just talking among themselves; when they criticized someone, their target would feel obliged to answer.

The magazine was doing well, but Tyrrell's infatuation with Reagan (in the magazine he fondly referred to the President as "Our Ron") began to cause problems for him in the world outside the *Spectator*. Given his feelings, he simply couldn't use his *Post* column to pick fights with the Administration—or to offer any criticism other than the gentle we're-all-on-the-same-side variety. That is not a posture that makes for interesting columnizing, and by 1982 Greenfield had cooled on Tyrrell. He found himself moving into the paper's op-ed Siberia, appearing less frequently and on varying days of the week. By the end of the year he was rarely appearing at all.



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Even after the *Post* quit publishing him, Tyrrell continued to write the column for syndication, and he also worked on another book, which he called *The Liberal Crack-Up*. It was an attempt to move beyond the sketches of *Public Nuisances* to more-general statements about the political culture. The book discussed the change from the old liberalism of the Roosevelt and Truman years to what Tyrrell called the “New Age Liberalism” of the sixties and seventies—the liberalism of feminism, environmentalism, anti-nukism, and the like.

The book, published in 1984, received a few good notices, but Tyrrell wasn’t happy. In a *Spectator* column he complained that *The Liberal Crack-Up* had not been reviewed in the *Post*, *The New York Times*, and other liberal publications—something, he suggested, that might be the result of a conspiracy to silence conservative voices. (As it turned out, both papers eventually ran reviews.) Beyond the reviews, though, there was a sense that Tyrrell’s thinking, even at a fairly early stage in his career, was becoming a bit stale. There wasn’t much nuance in his treatment of the good guys and the bad guys, and his baroque style made an easy target. Hendrik Hertzberg, writing in *The New Republic*, attacked Tyrrell’s “verbal dandyism—Chicken McMencken, perhaps”:

The formula is simple. First, select a person to attack. If possible, refer to him or her as the Hon. insert surname, the Rev. insert surname, or Dr. insert surname. Second, call the person a nasty name, either a heavily sarcastic one (esteemed eminento, sonorous pontificator, distinguished scholar) or simply a jeering one—bellyacher, buffoon, dolt, dunderhead, galoot, gasbag, greenhorn, half-wit, idiot, imbecile, jackass, loony, moron, nincompoop, pinhead, poltroon, popinjay, quack, rube, sap, simpleton, snot, windbag, wretch, yahoo, yokel, or zealot. Third, add an adjective (optional). Brazen, fuliginous, gaseous, gimcrack, maudlin, meretricious, piffling, portentous, sophomoric, puerile—any of these will do. Fourth, accuse the person of engaging in bibble-babble, claptrap, flapdoodle, flumdiddle, hokum, moonshine, pishposh, rumble-bumble, pronunciamentos, or tosh. Finally, work in a reference to the United States as “the Republic.” You will soon be writing, or programming your computer to write, sentences such as this one, from page 21: “There have always been whistle-brained pontificators at large in the Republic, all promising a New Age full of wonder and kookery.”

To add to Tyrrell’s growing negative mood, he began to feel less welcome at the Reagan White House. His 1982 meeting with the President and conservative intellectuals, which Tyrrell had hoped would be the first of many, was instead the last. (He returned to the White House on other occasions, but not for his cherished purpose of establishing a conservative political counterculture.) Tyrrell blamed the men around Reagan, particularly David Gergen, who, Tyrrell believed, wanted to keep conservatives away from Reagan lest they exert too much influence.

The moment of opportunity Tyrrell had had in 1980—the moment when it seemed he might become a truly public

figure—had passed. When, in 1985, Tyrrell and the *Spectator* pulled up stakes and moved to Washington, to live and work at the center of government and political journalism, they instead found themselves increasingly marginalized in what conservatives sometimes call the “right-wing echo chamber”—until events intervened to bring the magazine a level of fame and prosperity the editors had never thought possible.

WASHINGTON

By 1985 the *Spectator* had had a national profile for nearly a decade, and Indiana, although a comfortable place to live, began to chafe. “In part we just felt Bloomington was a provincial outpost,” Pleszczynski says. “The only interesting people were at the university, and most of them shunned us.” Moving east would bring the magazine into contact with more writers, cultural figures, and intellectuals. It would give the *Spectator* an address to match its reputation.

After rejecting New York—Manhattan was too expensive and too close to *National Review*, the editors felt—the magazine decided to move to Washington. But downtown Washington was also expensive, so Burr rented offices across the Potomac, in Arlington, Virginia. The accommodations were spartan, and the staff mostly stayed out of the city, choosing instead to live in suburban apartments. Tyrrell moved into a large house in McLean, Virginia, just outside the Beltway—“the American side of the Beltway,” as he called it. Using the proceeds from the sale of his house in Bloomington, The American Spectator Educational Foundation paid for a significant portion of the new house: about \$200,000. The foundation also bought a big black Mercedes for Tyrrell’s use; gave him a generous entertainment budget and paid for a membership in the Cosmos Club, on Embassy Row; and continued to pay for his trips to New York and London.

Despite all the comforts, it was a troubled transition for Tyrrell. After the move his marriage—he and Judy Mathews Tyrrell had been married since 1972 and had two daughters and a son—began to fall apart. In 1988 she divorced him, leaving him alone in the big house in McLean. Tyrrell began to spend more time in town, cultivating the image of a sophisticated playboy. He wrote often about his friend Taki Theodoracopulos, the Greek shipping heir and jet setter usually known simply as Taki, and the many evenings the two of them spent hanging out in fashionable nightspots around the world. To people close to him, the I’m-having-fun bravado masked a sad reality, which Tyrrell seemed to acknowledge when he later wrote, of his life after the divorce, “Lose a family—gain a nightclub.” He had an affair with a much younger woman, a beautiful staffer in the Bush White House. They vacationed in Grenada, where Tyrrell wrote of the heroism of Ronald Reagan’s liberation of the island.

As Tyrrell struggled, and spent even less time on *Specta-*

tor matters than he had before, the magazine continued to evolve. One of the purposes of moving east had been to be closer to more journalists, writers who could look into a story and report what they found. The pages of the *Spectator* began to fill with articles such as Rael Jean Isaac's investigation of the Government Accountability Project, anti-nuclear-power activists whose reports were often cited unquestioningly in the mainstream press; Michael Fumento's article on the left-leaning Center for Defense Information; and a story about pro-Sandinista members of Congress by a young writer named David Brock, who at the time was working for *Insight* magazine, owned by the conservative *Washington Times*. "It was the kind of reporting done in standard print media, except it was done in accordance with conservative suppositions rather than liberal ones," Andrew Ferguson recalls. "It asked questions that only conservatives would ask."

This was a big change. Writers who in an earlier era might simply have pontificated on a topic were now making phone calls, looking at documents, and discovering new information. The new style proved popular with readers; in a few years Burr and the *Spectator* editors realized that reporting from the right made for a particularly appealing marketing device. "In selling subscriptions you could call the magazine America's leading monthly of investigative journalism," Pleszczynski says. "You could use the word 'investigative' against the liberals, like we're getting the goods on these rats."

It was a task that seemed to suit David Brock perfectly. He was young and ambitious, with a network of connections in Republican circles. A serious, unflashy writer, he focused on weighty issues, most often involving U.S. foreign policy. As the nineties arrived, his articles displayed a growing scope, especially a 1991 cover story on the "incompetent reign" of Bush's Secretary of State, James Baker, whom Brock portrayed as unprincipled and more interested in gamesmanship than statesmanship. The article stuck to the topic of Baker's job performance with one exception: a small aside that in retrospect seems to have offered a glimpse of Brock's future direction. Discussing two top Baker aides, Robert Zoellick and Margaret Tutwiler, Brock wrote, "Tutwiler is first among equals," adding, in parentheses, "I assume that Zoellick does not receive a fresh rose on his pillow each night while on the road with the secretary, delivered by Baker's security detail." It was a jarring note, a hint of scandal unsupported by any evidence. Daniel Wattenberg, who began writing for the magazine about the same time as Brock, says, "I remember that's when I noticed his style changing. Up until then he had not been that kind of reporter."

**Portrayed by the left as a political
dirty-tricks machine, the *Spectator's*
anti-Clinton Arkansas Project
in fact bore more resemblance
to a Keystone Kops operation.**

For a writer becoming more interested in hints of scandal, the 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas offered a bonanza of possibilities. In early 1992 Burr approached Pleszczynski and said that a contributor had offered a \$5,000 grant to fund a story on the way Senate Democrats had used Anita Hill in an attempt to block the Thomas confirmation. Burr suggested Brock as the reporter, and Pleszczynski agreed. Brock happily accepted the assignment. The article he produced, "The Real Anita Hill," was a wide-ranging attack on Hill's credibility and included Brock's now famous question, "So Hill may be a bit nutty, and a bit slutty, but is she an outright liar?" His answer, of course, was yes. (Later Brock would have an equally famous change of heart and confess to using grossly unethical methods in subsequent stories about Hill, adding further confusion to the question of her credibility.)

"The Real Anita Hill" proved a sensation. It tapped into an enormous well of resentment among Republicans, who five years earlier had been stunned by the ferocity of Democratic attacks on the Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. The radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh read parts of Brock's story aloud on the air, and overnight

The American Spectator was famous. Actually, faster than overnight. "When Limbaugh mentioned it, I remember coming back to the office that afternoon," says Christopher Caldwell, who was the magazine's assistant managing editor at the time. "The phones were

ringing so fast that no one could make a call. I'd never seen anything like it."

Many of those callers had checkbooks in hand, ready to subscribe to a magazine they had only just heard of. In January of 1992, before the Hill piece was published, the *Spectator's* circulation was around 30,000—virtually unchanged from what it had been a decade earlier. By the end of the year it had hit 114,000 and was still rising.

THE TROOPERS' TALES

The election of 1992 held the promise of more success—if Bill Clinton were elected and the *Spectator* could once again be an opposition journal. Many conservatives believed that the Bush presidency had enervated the right, and some Republicans had grown tired of defending what they viewed as a listless Administration. Some even believed it might be a good thing if the Republican Party lost the White House for a term, to give the party the kick it needed to rejuvenate itself. So, at least for the editors of the *Spectator*, Clinton's election in November was not a crushing disappointment (Christopher Caldwell actually voted for Clinton).

The happiness of the *Spectator* staff was clear enough in December of 1992, when the magazine held its twenty-fifth-anniversary dinner at the Capital Hilton Hotel, in Washington. It was a time to celebrate the *Spectator*'s accomplishments, said P. J. O'Rourke, the master of ceremonies, who had written humor pieces for the magazine over the years. "But we are also here to celebrate something else—our return to political opposition. Let's be honest with ourselves. What a relief to be on the attack again. No more gentle sparring with the Administration. No more striking with the flat of our sword. No more firing blanks. Ladies and gentlemen, we have game in our sights. Clinton may be a disaster for the rest of the nation, but he is meat on our table. What a joy to be able to turn to the helmsman of our good ship *Spectator* and say, 'Captain Bob, bring the guns down to deck level and load with grapeshot.'"

The crowd loved it. But even though the magazine was delighted to be back in opposition, nothing in the *Spectator* in 1993 would support the charge that it was obsessed with Bill Clinton. The magazine published little serious reporting on the new President or his Administration, two exceptions being Fred Barnes's devastating critique of the assumptions behind the First Lady's health-care initiative and Wattenberg's examination of Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The year's cover stories were eclectic: articles on Slobodan Milosevic, the mayoral race in Los Angeles, political correctness on Broadway, and Canada's first female Prime Minister.

Then, in August of 1993, Brock was approached by a wealthy Republican who put him in touch with Cliff Jackson, an Arkansas lawyer who was a longtime enemy of Bill Clinton's. Jackson represented several state troopers who said they had facilitated Clinton's extramarital liaisons during his years as governor and were now ready to tell the press about it. Jackson was working with the *Los Angeles Times*, which he hoped would publish the story, giving it the imprimatur of a first-rate mainstream news organization. But he also feared that the *Times* might change its mind, and if so, he wanted a reliable backup to publish the story.

That's where the *Spectator* came in. At Jackson's invitation, Brock went to Arkansas and talked to the troopers, with the understanding that the *Spectator* would break the story only if the *Times* declined to publish. After much haggling with Jackson and the troopers, Brock finished an early version of his article in the beginning of October. "I was stunned when I read his first draft," Pleszczynski recalls. "I knew it was the hottest story the magazine would ever publish." But the magazine did not have permission to publish, and for the next two months Brock and Pleszczynski waited. During that time the *Los Angeles Times* reporters William Rempel and Douglas Frantz worked on their story, carefully gathering evidence to corroborate the troopers' version of events.

October passed, and then November, and then the first two weeks of December, and the *Los Angeles Times* had still

not published its trooper story. Rempel and Frantz faced delaying tactics from the Clinton White House and opposition at their paper. By mid-December word of the story was all around Washington; when television reporters started mentioning it, everyone knew it would be out soon. With the *Times* still not publishing, Jackson told the *Spectator* it could go with the story. On the night of December 19, a Sunday, the editors were at the *Spectator* office, sending Brock's story out to the press sheet by sheet on the magazine's creaky old fax machine. By Monday morning the news was everywhere, and *The American Spectator* was the magazine that had broken it.

On Tuesday the *Times* finally published its account, and although the gist of the story was the same, the contrast between the two articles pointed to something characteristic in Brock's work. The core allegation of the *Spectator*'s piece was solid (there is little doubt that Clinton engaged in the kind of behavior depicted in the article), but Brock included a variety of lurid, extraneous, and unverifiable details that made easy targets for Clinton's defenders. For example, he suggested that Hillary Rodham Clinton was having an affair with her law partner—later the White House deputy counsel—Vincent Foster. Brock quoted one trooper describing a dinner at which Foster "came up behind Hillary, and squeezed her rear end with both of his hands." The trooper continued, "Then he winked and gave me the 'OK' sign." A little later that evening, the trooper said, "Vince put his hand over one of Hillary's breasts and made the same 'OK' sign to me. And she just stood there cooing, 'Oh Vince. Oh Vince.'" Brock offered no corroboration for the incident; in fact, the only person named by the trooper as a witness told Brock that she hadn't been there.

Another oddity in the article was Brock's reference to a woman "whom the trooper remembered only as Paula." Brock's source said the woman had joined Clinton alone in a room at the Excelsior Hotel after the governor spotted her at a business conference. The inclusion of Paula Jones's name—albeit only her first name—would have enormous consequences, but it appears to have been included almost by accident. In a 1999 interview Pleszczynski said, "It was obvious from the start that we would never mention any of the women by name without their approval." In the case of Paula, "It never dawned on me that anyone would recognize her. David didn't know her last name, and I thought Little Rock was a big enough place for there to be many Paulas." Brock knew the names of the women involved in all the other cases (they had turned down his requests for interviews), but he had tossed in the Paula anecdote without even knowing who the woman was.

In contrast, the *Times* reporters, while relying heavily on the troopers' accounts, searched more widely for evidence that might verify the accusations. For example, after the troopers named a woman with whom they said Clinton had had an affair, Rempel and Frantz examined Clinton's tele-

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phone records for calls to the woman. Among other things, they found that during a business trip in 1989 Clinton had called the woman from his hotel at 1:23 A.M. and talked for more than an hour and a half. A few hours later, at 7:45 A.M., he called again. The reporters found eleven calls from Clinton's cell phone to the woman in a single day. It was not solid proof, but it gave the *Times* story a degree of reliability missing from Brock's account.

The White House denied everything. The President's damage-control team was happy—at least, happy under the circumstances—that the *Spectator* was receiving all the attention for breaking the news, because this allowed the White House to ignore Rempel and Frantz's careful work and denounce Troopergate as a right-wing smear. But in the conservative world Troopergate was a smashing success. Like the Anita Hill story, it got tremendous airplay on talk radio. Reporters ran features on the magazine's new notoriety. Circulation had risen to 143,000 by December of 1993. The January, 1994, issue, containing Brock's article, sold 296,000 copies.

Brock became a superstar. He appeared on TV, was celebrated at conservative gatherings, and by his own account basked in his new reputation as "the Bob Woodward of the right." The recording on his home answering machine said, "I can't come to the phone right now. I'm either on another call, writing, or out taking down a President."

FISHING EXPEDITION

The euphoria over Troopergate obscured something else that was going on at the *Spectator* at the same time—completely separate from Brock's talks with the troopers. On October 16, 1993, as the magazine waited for the okay from Cliff Jackson, Tyrrell was invited to join some friends for a fishing trip on Chesapeake Bay. On board the forty-two-foot boat with Tyrrell were Richard Larry, David Henderson, and Stephen Boynton. Larry was the official at Scaife who back in 1970 had arranged for the grant that allowed the struggling *Alternative* to survive; in the intervening years he had stayed with Scaife, and the foundation continued supporting the magazine with yearly grants. Henderson, a public-relations man, was a good friend of Larry's who had also come to know Tyrrell and *The Alternative* in 1970, when Henderson was an official with the U.S. Jaycees and Larry recommended that he meet the young journalists in Bloomington. Boynton, a Washington lawyer and former aide to Senator Ernest Hollings, of South Carolina, had been a friend of Henderson's for twenty years but had only briefly met Tyrrell and had never met Larry.

Larry, Henderson, and Boynton were all avid outdoorsmen—and all interested in politics. As they set their lines, they began talking about Bill Clinton. (Tyrrell did not tell them about Brock's article-in-progress; that was still a closely guarded secret.) According to an unpublished memoir written by Henderson, Boynton talked about his experiences in Arkansas, where he had met a man named Parker

Dozhier, who operated a bait shop on Lake Catherine, near Hot Springs. Boynton told the men that Dozhier had written a "white paper" alleging corruption at the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission during the Clinton years.

Henderson wrote in his memoir,

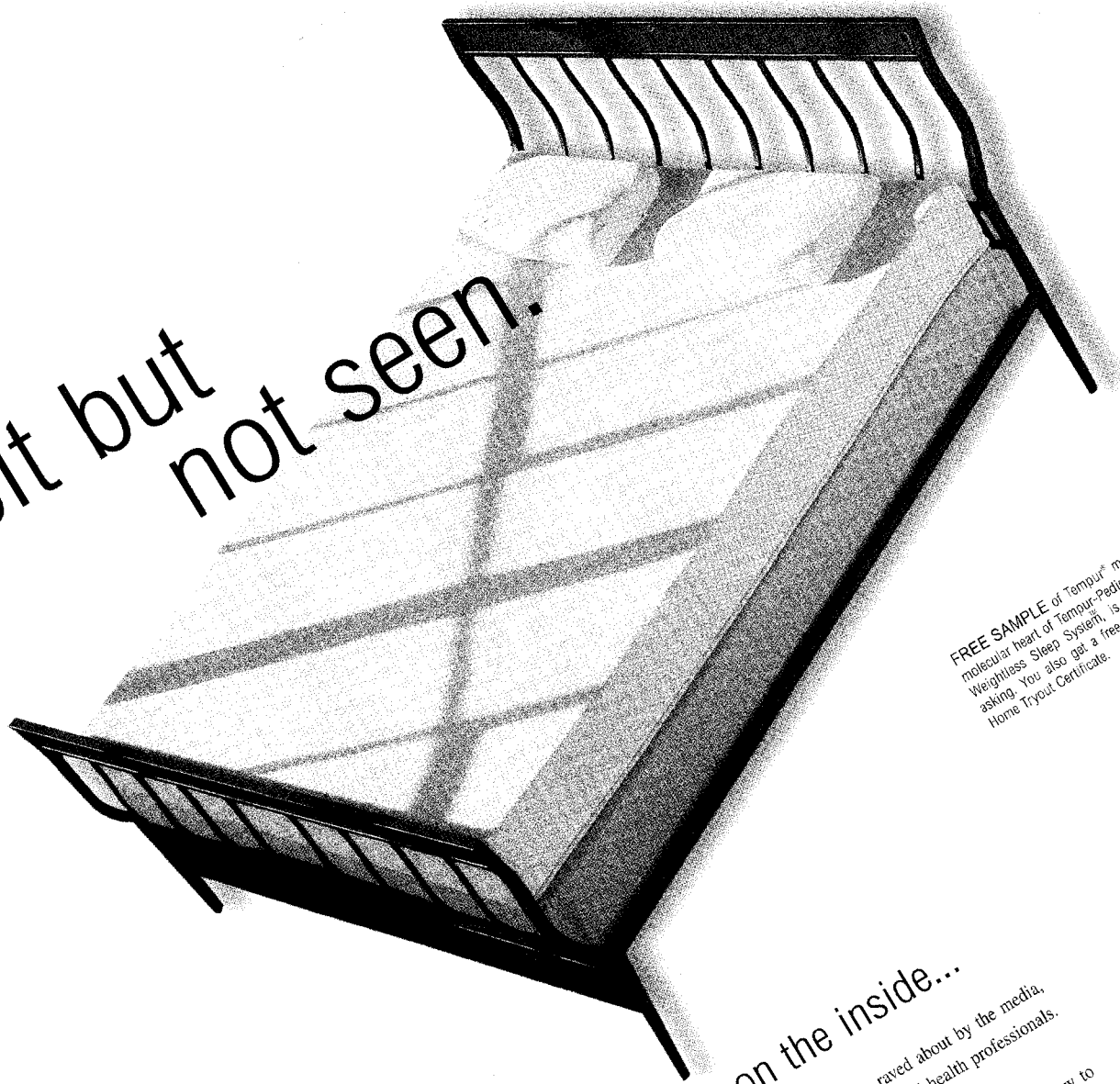
As Steve and I talked about this issue, there was a visceral reaction from both Bob Tyrrell and Dick Larry. Bob speculated aloud about the possibility of doing an investigative piece in *The American Spectator*. Dick Larry said that it would be difficult for the young writers at the *Spectator* to do such a project because of the cultural differences involved. After all, this was a fish and game story, not strictly a political or intellectual story. [Larry] believed that the trust necessary for a project of this type could not be attained by "twenty-somethings" who had no background or ability to meld with the outdoors types. Addressing me, he said, "I could do it, you could do it, and Steve could do it, but these young intellectuals would never understand the culture sufficiently, and they would fail to gain the cooperation necessary to break a story like this."

The conversation ended with the understanding that the *Spectator* would apply for a Scaife grant to fund an investigation of the "fish and game story." The plan that developed was for Boynton to look into Dozhier's tip and, if he found useful information, for a *Spectator* staff writer to turn it into a magazine piece. A few days after the fishing trip the grant request was sent to Scaife, which approved the project. Everyone expected that it would last a month or two.

Early in the morning of November 2, Henderson picked up *The Washington Post* and read a front-page story headlined "CLINTONS' FORMER REAL ESTATE FIRM PROBED; FEDERAL INQUIRIES FOCUS ON FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES OF OTHER ARKANSANS." The article said that David Hale, a former municipal judge, had accused Clinton of pressuring him to make Small Business Administration loans to benefit the failing Whitewater real-estate investment. Henderson was transfixed. He knew Hale from a time when both had been in the Jaycees. Although they hadn't seen each other in fifteen years, they had kept up with mutual friends, and Henderson felt sure he could reach Hale. "There was a unique opportunity here, and it didn't require brilliance on my part to recognize it," Henderson wrote. "Maybe, just maybe, I could ... allow *The American Spectator* to compete with the big media on this story." Excited, Henderson called Tyrrell at 7:00 A.M. and told him to read the *Post* article.

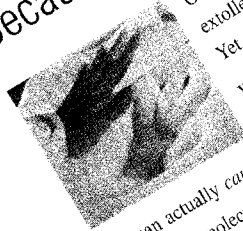
With Tyrrell's blessing, Henderson got in touch with Hale and arranged to see him, along with Boynton, in Little Rock. Meeting at Hale's lawyer's office on November 20, Henderson and Boynton explained that they had been retained by the *Spectator* and asked Hale to assist them as they investigated Whitewater. Hale agreed. Once that happened, the modest investigation that had been discussed on Chesapeake Bay no longer really existed. After the Whitewater revelations and, later, Troopergate, what came to be known as the Arkansas Project no longer had anything to

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do with the state Game & Fish Commission. Tyrrell came to believe that there was a vast reservoir of Clinton corruption to be found in Arkansas, and the once limited project was transformed into an all-purpose investigation of the President's past. "I thought that by early '94 we really had a hell of a lot of scandal to reveal," Tyrrell recalls today, "and I'm pretty convinced we only touched the tip of the iceberg."

Henderson and Boynton traveled frequently to Arkansas, where Hale acted as what Henderson later called a "living road map" to Whitewater. Hale helped Henderson and Boynton find land records that were obscure but available to the public. He took them on a tour of the Whitewater development. And he told them lots of stories. According to Henderson's memoir, the two men met Hale many times, sometimes at Dozhier's bait shop. Henderson and Boynton had put Dozhier on the payroll, at \$1,000 a month, to gather information for them when they weren't in Arkansas. During the visits Hale was often in the company of FBI agents under the control of the recently appointed Whitewater special prosecutor Robert Fiske; Hale would become a key witness in the financial-fraud case against Clinton's former business partners James and Susan McDougal and Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker. (Hale himself was later imprisoned for fraud.)

Henderson and Boynton believed that they were learning things that would make for groundbreaking stories in the *Spectator*. That opinion was not shared by others at the magazine. "They had *nothing*," Daniel Wattenberg recalls. "Henderson supposedly had Arkansas wired for sound and would deliver big bombshells, but whenever I would challenge him, he would either not have anything or say he couldn't share what he knew." Pleszczyński, too, was deeply skeptical. "I wasn't impressed by what they had to say," he wrote later, in a memo. "They seemed to have a source or two—David Hale, Parker Dozhier—but not much more than that. There always seemed to be a lot of hush-hush and heavy breathing, but it never amounted to anything concrete enough for a story." The magazine published several articles on Whitewater by James Ring Adams, a former *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer, but as 1994 wore on, it seemed increasingly clear that nothing of any real consequence would come out of the Arkansas Project.

The magazine, however, was still riding high on the success of Troopergate. *The American Spectator* was going where no opinion magazine, of any political persuasion, had ever gone before. Circulation continued to rise, hitting a peak of 309,000 in February of 1995. And since readers seemed to love the Clinton stuff, there was every reason to believe the circulation would rise even higher. The maga-

zine's annual budgets hit \$8 million, \$9 million, and nearly \$10 million during those years, also unprecedented figures. Contribution income (the magazine remained tax-exempt) also went up. The *Spectator*'s board of directors gave Tyrrell, Burr, and Pleszczyński substantial raises.

MENA

One day Christopher Caldwell was at the *Spectator*'s fax machine when a letter from Boynton arrived. It was a monthly bill for the services of Henderson and Boynton and the expenses of the Arkansas Project. It was for \$43,000. "I thought it was a typo," Caldwell recalls, astonished at the figure. But it wasn't a typo; each month Burr signed a check for Henderson and Boynton's work that was usually between \$35,000 and \$45,000. The money was ultimately provided by Scaife, but the checks were written on The American Spectator Educational Foundation's account, just like payments for other expenses. Scaife's contribution, which in the past had been used for the magazine's overall operations, was now going exclusively to the Arkansas Project.

At first Henderson was paid \$10,000 a month and Boynton \$12,500; later they received \$12,000 and \$14,500, respectively. Henderson and Boynton also retained a private investigator and paid him about \$470,000 over the course of the project. By early 1995 they had expanded beyond Whitewater and were work-

What at first appeared to be an enormous success—after Troopergate the *Spectator* was a hot magazine—led to a government investigation and financial ruin.

ing with Tyrrell on the subject of Mena Airport, a remote landing strip in western Arkansas that had long been the subject of tales about gunrunning, drug running, and CIA skullduggery. Tyrrell was talking regularly with an Arkansas state trooper named L. D. Brown, who had been the source for a Troopergate follow-up that focused on further allegations regarding Clinton's extramarital affairs. After that article was published, Tyrrell believed that Brown knew more about Clinton than he had revealed, and Tyrrell was eager to learn what it was.

In 1995 Tyrrell wine and dined Brown, looking for information about Mena. "Henderson and I spent a lot of time telling Brown that the story was going to come out," Tyrrell recalls. "He was fearful for his life. Finally one night we got it all out of him. We were at my house. I was the only person who could go through a fifth of whiskey, so I could keep up with him, drinking his Stolli." The next morning, Tyrrell recalls, he woke up with a terrible hangover and the belief that he had an important story.

Tyrrell wrote an 7,000-word piece on Mena that began with a justification for pursuing allegations about Clinton and drugs. After Troopergate "some argued that the gov-

ernor's sex life was a private matter," Tyrrell wrote in an unpublished draft.

Some argued that it had no relevance to his public life. [But] every reader agreed that if stories could be reported depicting irregularities of a more serious nature they would be very damaging to Clinton's repute and political longevity. Well, how about evidence linking the governor to drug trafficking, money laundering, and illegal international arms shipments?

Tyrrell laid out Brown's tale. The trooper said that in 1984 he had applied for a job with the Central Intelligence Agency and in response received a call from the notorious drug dealer Barry Seal. Seal directed Brown to meet him at Mena. There, Brown says, he boarded Seal's C-123K transport plane, which according to Brown was loaded with crates of M-16 rifles intended for Contra rebels in Nicaragua. Brown says he went along as Seal and his crew air-dropped the weapons and then landed in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, where they picked up bags of what Brown later learned was cocaine.

According to Tyrrell's account, after two such flights Brown told Seal he wanted no part of the guns-for-drugs operation. And Brown said he was later disappointed to learn that Bill Clinton knew what was going on. Brown told Tyrrell that he had confronted Clinton with the information about Seal's operation and Clinton had told him not to worry. "That's Lasater's deal," Brown says Clinton told him, referring to Dan Lasater, a well-known Little Rock businessman later convicted of distributing drugs. In addition, Brown's brother Dwayne told Tyrrell that when he asked L.D., "Who's pushing this?" his brother "nodded over toward the governor's mansion."

Tyrrell believed the story. He wrote in the original draft,

The American Spectator, after a thirteen-month investigation, has come upon documents and testimony revealing Governor Clinton again compromising state officials but now in activity involving the apparent misuse of an American intelligence agency and drug trafficking. According to evidence that has come into our hands, Clinton involved at least one of his top troopers in intelligence work in foreign countries and in flying aboard international flights out of Arkansas that turned out to be involved with drug trafficking, arms shipments, and the importation of unreported currency. Precisely how much profit Clinton realized from these flights is at this point unknown.

The manuscript caused an uproar at the magazine. Christopher Caldwell wrote a long memo to Pleszczynski, taking Tyrrell's draft apart allegation by allegation. "It runs the risk of discrediting by association all of the investigative work on which we've staked our reputation over the last 30 months," Caldwell wrote. "Running it would make us the laughingstock of the journalism world and cost us a mammoth price in both reputation and subscribers."

But Tyrrell insisted. "Goddammit, I want you to understand that I edit this magazine," Caldwell remembers Tyrrell

telling him. "It's going to run." When the showdown came, Caldwell refused to take part in the editing. He walked out, and Pleszczynski followed. A few days later Caldwell was gone for good, but Pleszczynski stayed on. A resolution was achieved when Tyrrell enlisted John Corry, the former *New York Times* reporter who wrote the magazine's "Press-watch" column (and who just happened to be visiting from New York), to edit the article. Holing up in an empty office, Corry rewrote the manuscript as a one-man's-story featuring L. D. Brown. It appeared under Tyrrell's name in the August, 1995, issue.

Tyrrell and Henderson believed that the Mena piece would be a bombshell. When publication day arrived, Henderson went to Tyrrell's house to help with the expected press inquiries. But no one called. "It just went flat as a brick," Henderson says. That didn't mean it had no impact. In Washington conservative circles word of the internal squabble at the *Spectator* spread fast. "People knew about that more than they knew about the article," Pleszczynski says. The open revolt suggested that Tyrrell wasn't really in charge of his own magazine. His later effort to re-establish control would result in a fight that proved much more ferocious than the dispute over Mena Airport.

BLOWUP

Since the 1970s the *Spectator* had lived on money from three sources: subscriptions, advertising, and charitable contributions. Advertising had always been by far the smallest component; political magazines never attract the kind of automobile and liquor and beauty-product ads that are so profitable for general-interest publications. But when the *Spectator's* circulation rose spectacularly in 1994 and 1995, its management believed that the magazine might finally be able to attract those ads, and to put the *Spectator* into an entirely new category: the moneymaking political magazine.

The problem, management believed, was the physical magazine. It was printed on cheap, newsprint-like paper not suitable for reproducing the color pictures that advertisers required. So in 1995 the staff began work on a redesign, giving the magazine a new look and new artwork and, most important, printing it on expensive, glossy paper. A New York-based salesman was hired to give the *Spectator* a presence in the nation's advertising capital. The new design, filled with color artwork and fronted by a new logo, made its debut in January of 1996.

But things did not work out as planned. In the early months of 1995 circulation began falling. From its high of 309,000, in February of 1995, it had fallen to around 200,000 by the time the new design was unveiled. And the hoped-for new advertising revenues did not materialize. "They ran into political objections to the magazine," recalls Terry Eastland, who would later become the magazine's publisher. "The *Spectator* had gotten this very high-profile,

anti-Clinton reputation, so if you go into consumer ads, the agency or advertiser can say, "That's nice, you have great demographics, but we can reach the same demographic in another magazine without being associated with controversy." Making matters worse, the *Spectator* began losing more money on expensive direct-mail appeals designed to keep circulation from falling below 200,000.

Meanwhile, the Arkansas Project was limping along. Henderson and Boynton were, in Henderson's words, "essentially self-directed." A better way of putting it might be that no one was in charge. Neither Tyrrell nor Burr kept a careful eye on the work that was being done, and yet the \$40,000 checks were still going out of the magazine's office each month. The project continued for two years after the Mena debacle, and during that time produced nothing of use to the *Spectator*. In the spring of 1997 the project's miserable cost-to-benefit ratio became a source of friction between Ron Burr and Scaife.

The dispute was simple. With the magazine beginning to suffer from the squeeze produced by lower circulation and higher production and direct-mail costs, Burr had begun to use a small portion of the Scaife funds to cover non-project articles and also some general operating expenses. It seemed like a reasonable idea, because devoting all of Scaife's contributions to the project—an enterprise that was worthless to the magazine—meant, in effect, that Scaife was no longer offering support to *The American Spectator* but was instead subsidizing Henderson and Boynton. Strapped for cash, Burr sent a request to Scaife for a grant of nearly \$1 million.

Richard Larry was dumbfounded. In his view, the Scaife money was to be used for the Arkansas Project, period. The two men argued over the issue; Larry also discussed it with Tyrrell, who sided with him. The dispute reached a critical point when Tyrrell told Burr that Larry had said that Burr had misallocated Arkansas Project funds. Believing that his integrity had been challenged, Burr demanded that the project be audited.

Tyrrell resisted an audit. Burr insisted. During the standoff Tyrrell, looking to shore up his authority, brought Henderson into the magazine, giving him the title of vice-president. (Henderson officially went off the Arkansas Project payroll in July of 1997; his salary as vice-president was paid by a specific grant from Scaife.) Burr continued to insist on an audit, and the *Spectator* became two warring camps, with Pleszczynski on Burr's side and some directors of the magazine on Tyrrell's. Determined to show his primacy, Tyrrell fired Burr, ending an association of nearly thirty years.

Ultimately there was no audit, but it seems unlikely that one would have resolved the dispute. There were no accusations that anyone had pocketed the Scaife money. Rather, Larry's objection was that the magazine had used Arkansas Project funds for general *Spectator* purposes. But how, precisely, could one define which was which? An audit could

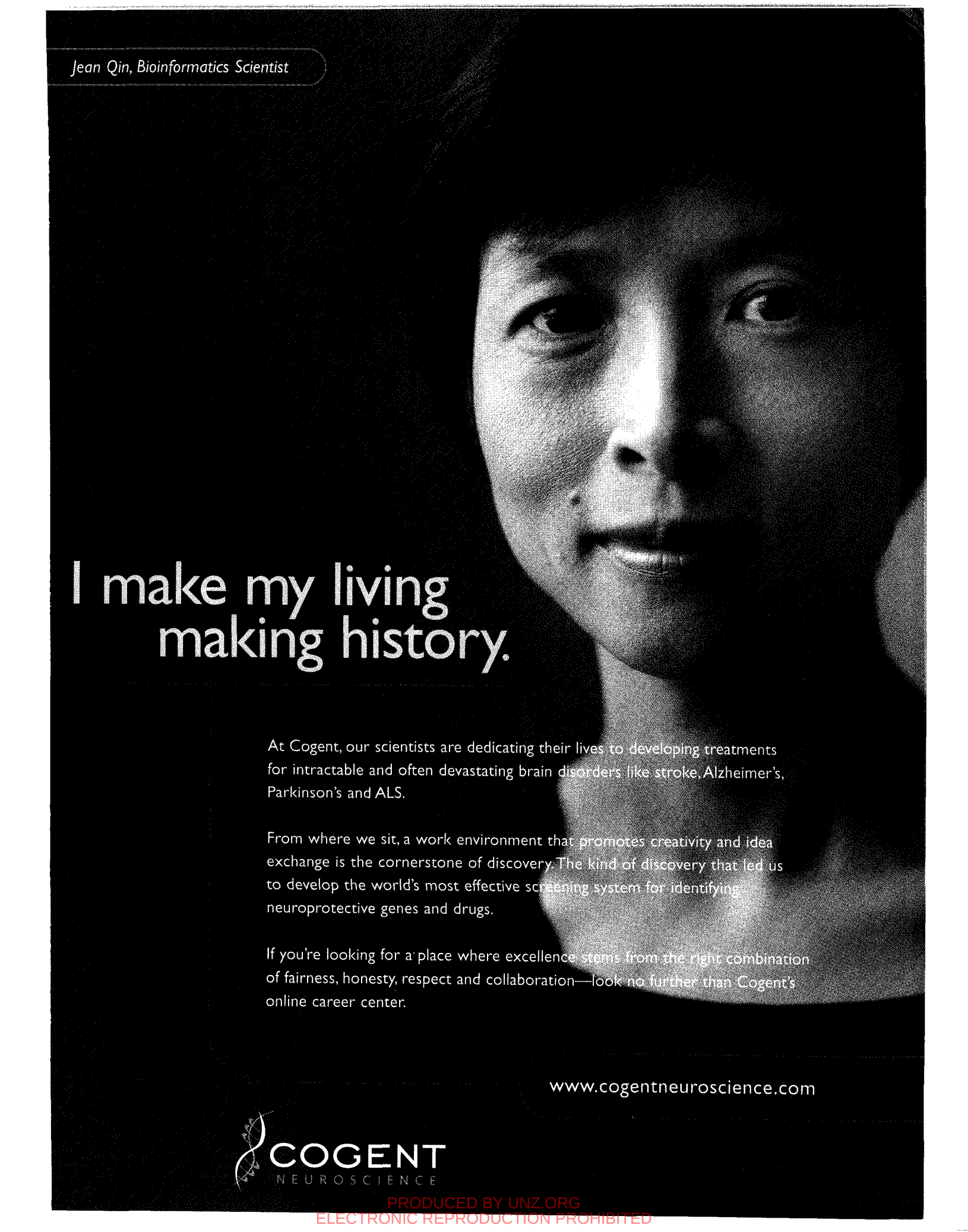
never have answered the question of whether Arkansas Project funds had been misallocated, because there had never been any formal understanding of how they would be allocated in the first place.

After the blowup the magazine's situation deteriorated rapidly. Tyrrell had spent nearly all of his internal political capital in getting rid of Burr. Needing a publisher, he turned to Eastland, a respected journalist and a former Reagan Justice Department spokesman who had been editing the journal *Forbes Media Critic*, which had recently ceased publication. Eastland joined the *Spectator* with the understanding that his first task would be a thorough review of the Arkansas Project. That in itself was a full-time job, and Eastland became, in effect, the magazine's inspector general. "I didn't know anything about it from the outside," he recalls. "When I went in there, I spent the bulk of my days looking at records from Henderson and Boynton."

As Eastland pored over expense vouchers and American Express receipts, the magazine took more financial hits. First, the board of directors decided to give a six-figure severance to Burr, to be paid over two years. Second, the conservative Bradley Foundation, which had long supported the *Spectator*, withheld its contribution out of concern for the magazine's stability. And finally, not only did Scaife turn down the million-dollar grant request but it later decided to cut the *Spectator* off completely.

Richard Mellon Scaife was widely known to entertain conspiracy theories about the 1993 death of Vincent Foster. A Scaife-owned newspaper hired Christopher Ruddy, a reporter who questioned the authorities' conclusion that Foster had killed himself in a park just outside Washington. In 1997 Ruddy published a book, *The Strange Death of Vincent Foster*, which suggested that Foster had been murdered. The book appeared almost simultaneously with the final report of the independent counsel Kenneth Starr, who concluded after an exhaustive investigation that Foster had killed himself. Most conservative publications took Starr's report as an opportunity to knock down Ruddy's work once and for all, but since Ruddy was a favorite of Scaife's, the *Spectator* faced a dilemma over whether to review the book. Had it been Pleszczynski's decision, the book would most likely not have been reviewed, but Tyrrell intervened, knowing the issue was a sensitive one for his biggest donor. Tyrrell gave the book to John Corry, who had rewritten the Mena Airport story.

Corry hated the book. Calling Ruddy a "very heavy breather," he compared Foster conspiracy speculation to way-out theories such as that the CIA had introduced crack cocaine into the ghetto, that a Navy missile had brought down TWA Flight 800, and that British Intelligence had assassinated Princess Diana. "Beware when an investigative reporter begins sentences with words like 'oddly,' 'strangely' or 'interestingly,'" Corry wrote. "There may be nothing odd, strange or interesting at all, but the game is to make you



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think there is." When the review appeared, in the December, 1997, issue, Scaife was livid. He called Tyrrell and told him that the foundation would no longer contribute to the *Spectator*, ending another relationship of some three decades.

THE BAIT-SHOP JUNTA

In the months after the Scaife pullout, the seriousness of the magazine's financial situation became clearer and clearer. Looking for ways to save money, Eastland put an end to direct-mail advertising, a move that saved the *Spectator* thousands of dollars but also meant that circulation would fall (which it did, from 200,000 to about 75,000 within three years). Eastland also allowed attrition to reduce the staff. And he cut back on Tyrrell's expenses, persuading the board of directors to force Tyrrell to pay for the portion of his house that The American Spectator Educational Foundation had covered when the magazine moved to Washington. Eastland got rid of the New York apartment and made Tyrrell buy the Mercedes from the magazine. Finally, he cut back on Tyrrell's travel and entertainment budget. Tyrrell, weakened after the fight to oust Burr, had little power to resist.

In January of 1998 the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke. It was a godsend for conservative commentators, but for the *Spectator* it meant even more trouble. On January 27 Hillary Clinton, denouncing the President's adversaries during an appearance on NBC, blamed a "vast right-wing conspiracy" for circulating baseless allegations against the Clintons. In a few weeks the Arkansas Project would become Exhibit A of the vast right-wing conspiracy. On March 17 the online magazine *Salon* published "The Road to Hale," a story that accused Scaife and the *Spectator* of funneling money to David Hale, by way of Parker Dozhier, allegedly to influence Hale's testimony against the President. *Salon's* witnesses were Caryn Mann, Dozhier's former girlfriend, and her son, Joshua Rand. The boy, who was thirteen at the time the payments allegedly began, told *Salon* that Dozhier would give Hale cash—sometimes \$40 or \$60, sometimes as much as \$500—when Hale visited the bait shop on Lake Catherine. Mann and her son alleged that Dozhier used money he received from Boynton (and thus the *Spectator*) to pay Hale. Dozhier denied the allegation.

Tyrrell ridiculed the story with jokes about the "bait-shop junta," and the *Spectator's* defenders argued not only that Mann and her son were not credible witnesses but also that the story bore the fingerprints of a White House defense team eager to divert attention from the Lewinsky matter. But the Clinton Justice Department took the *Salon* story very seriously. On April 9 Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder wrote to Kenneth Starr recommending an investigation of the bait-shop allegations. Starr appointed the former Justice Department official Michael Shaheen to look into the matter.

The decision meant that the *Spectator*, already barely

able to pay its bills, would have to hire a lawyer to defend it in an open-ended probe. Just before the investigation began, Eastland presented the results of his own Arkansas Project review to the magazine's board of directors. (It was done orally, with nothing written down that could later be subpoenaed.) The good news was that he had not found any funny business with the money that went to Henderson and Boynton. "They could account for the money they spent," Eastland says. "There were no serious discrepancies—maybe a few hundred dollars here and there out of nearly two million." Eastland also found no evidence to support the allegations that money or other things of value had been given to Hale, other than some meals and \$400 that was given to him so that he could make long-distance phone calls from prison. But beyond that, Eastland's presentation was a devastating indictment of the project. The short version was that the Arkansas Project was extremely expensive; had no managerial controls, accounting controls, or clear mission; and brought very little benefit—and enormous controversy—to the magazine. The board passed a series of resolutions stripping Tyrrell of the unilateral power to undertake similar projects in the future.

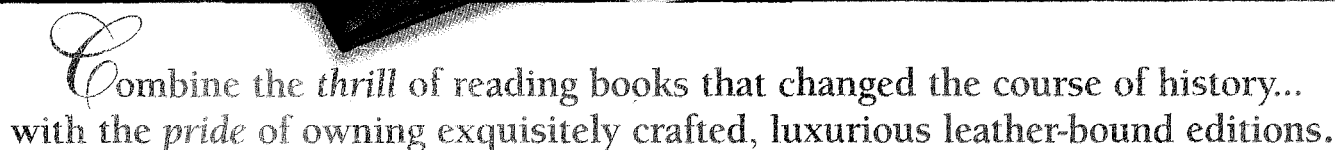
The Shaheen investigation went on for fourteen months. Scaife, Larry, Henderson, Boynton, Dozhier, and others were called to testify before a grand jury in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Sensitive to the appearance of violating the *Spectator's* First Amendment rights, prosecutors did not subpoena Tyrrell or any of the magazine's journalists. In July of 1999 Shaheen announced that he would not prosecute anyone involved in the allegations about Hale. "In some instances, there is little if any credible evidence establishing that a particular thing of value was demanded, offered or received," Shaheen wrote. "In other instances, there is insufficient credible evidence to show that a thing of value was provided or received with the criminal intent defined by any of the applicable statutes." Shaheen also filed a 168-page report with the court that oversaw the investigation. The report remains sealed, although there is a chance it will be made public whenever the Office of Independent Counsel releases its final report on Whitewater.

THE CONTINUING CRISIS

The *Spectator's* defenders took some comfort in the Shaheen report; it meant that the Arkansas Project, although stupid, at least had not broken any laws. But whatever relief the staff felt was more than countered by the magazine's worsening financial crisis. By early 2000 Eastland had put in place all the money-saving measures he could. They had all been stopgap measures anyway, designed to keep the magazine alive until a new benefactor came along.

Salvation appeared in the spring of 2000, when Conrad Black, the owner of *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The (London) Spectator*, Canada's *National Post*, and

BOOKS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD



outside the U. S.

the *Chicago Sun-Times*, offered to help the *Spectator*. Tyrrell had cultivated Black for years and hoped the relationship would one day pay off with a generous investment in the *Spectator*. After extensive talks with several *Spectator* executives, Black, acting in conjunction with two conservative foundations, offered enough money to stabilize the magazine's finances—about \$400,000 a year. Black made it clear that his group planned to provide the money indefinitely, guaranteeing the magazine's long-term survival.

But Black wanted much in return. First, he asked for de facto control over the board of directors. Second, he wanted to demote Tyrrell, taking away his title of editor in chief and cutting his pay by 40 percent. Third, he proposed that the widely respected conservative writer David Frum become the new editor of the *Spectator*. Although the offer would have given the magazine new life, and also, with the association of Black and Frum, a chance to regain its old respectability, it was a mortal threat to Tyrrell. He resolved to stop it.

One day during discussions of the plan, Tyrrell gave Eastland a ride back to the office. Sitting in the black Mercedes, Eastland asked Tyrrell whether he would rather see the Black proposal accepted, which would keep the magazine going but reduce Tyrrell's standing, or reject the proposal, which would mean that the *Spectator* would go under. "He said without hesitation that he'd choose rejecting the proposal," Eastland recalls. "I asked why, and he said he had a bond with all of those who had taken on Clinton and fought for his impeachment, and that he was seen as a leader of the opposition, and that if he were demoted or marginalized, he would be letting down those who had followed him. He also said Clinton and those around him would notice what a terrible fate had befallen him and take great pleasure from it. In his view, they would be vindicated if that happened."

Tyrrell found what appeared to be an escape route. While the board was still considering the Black proposal, Tyrrell told members he had arranged for a better deal from the high-tech investment guru George Gilder. (In truth, Gilder had pledged to give \$250,000 a year for three years, less than what Black's group proposed.) Even though it was not clear whether Gilder's offer would be sufficient to keep the magazine in business, Tyrrell's word was enough for his hand-picked board to say no to Black's bid.

By summer the magazine was almost out of money. In August, Gilder, who was looking for a new publication to feature his views on issues such as Internet bandwidth and the New Economy, offered to buy the *Spectator* outright. With the magazine a few weeks away from missing a payroll, Tyrrell agreed. He had known Gilder for years; he told employees that the *Spectator* would still be about politics and culture, but would now take more notice of technology issues. Instead the magazine became something entirely new, virtually unrecognizable to readers of the old *Spectator*. Gilder would eventually close the office and fire everyone—

except Tyrrell, who stayed on, with no control over the magazine he had run for thirty-three years.

TEMPTATION OF THE DEVIL

What killed *The American Spectator*? It's hard to avoid the conclusion that the success it enjoyed in the Troopergate period, rather than establishing the *Spectator* as the nation's premier conservative magazine, placed it on a path that would end in disaster. The Troopergate article itself, for all its flaws, was a valuable story; vilified though it was by the President's defenders, it was an accurate predictor of the kind of compulsive behavior that Clinton displayed in the White House during his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. But Troopergate also fostered the hubristic notion that the *Spectator* could bring down a President, which encouraged both Tyrrell and Scaife to pour money into the Arkansas Project. Portrayed by the left as a highly effective political dirty-tricks machine, the project in fact bore more resemblance to a Keystone Kops operation, as Henderson and Boynton crisscrossed Arkansas to no discernible effect.

Why couldn't Tyrrell see that the project—which involved nonjournalists and a private detective funded by a third party—was an extraordinarily dangerous proposition for any journalistic enterprise? Perhaps because Tyrrell never saw the *Spectator* solely as a journalistic enterprise. Since the early days in Bloomington, Tyrrell had envisioned *The Alternative* as an adjunct to a political movement. They had their party, we had ours. They had their magazine, we had ours. Years later his letters to Ronald Reagan ("we shall continue the good fight with you") suggested that his views had not changed. Still more years later, as he began the Arkansas Project, he felt the same way.

As for Ron Burr and the others who worked on the business side of the magazine, the Troopergate triumph promised to bring nearly limitless growth. Subscribers were signing up and money was rolling in, and for a moment it appeared that the *Spectator* might defy the law of gravity that governs small political magazines. Who could argue with that kind of success? "What happened to it was the temptation of the devil," says a conservative who was long associated with the magazine. "There was this dream of worldly financial success that no magazine of its kind has ever or will ever achieve. And it was destroyed by it."

On Monday, July 16, when George Gilder's movers arrived at the *Spectator*'s Arlington office, there wasn't much left to take. They packed up computers and a few pieces of furniture, but threw everything else into an enormous pile for the garbage men to pick up. They threw away original illustrations by Elliott Banfield. They threw away dozens of bound volumes of the *Spectator*'s past issues. And they tossed the old papier-mâché Mencken, dressed in his original black suit, onto a pile of trash—to be discarded the next day, along with everything else. ■

THE WARP AND THE WEFT

A short story

BY EDWARD J. DELANEY

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Bernard Carey's father had always said that shutting up and then staying shut up was the smartest way to go through life. Silence, he said, was without risk. Silence, he said, was often taken as wisdom. Correctly, he said. People would always be waiting for you to say something, which was good.

He held nightly demonstrations in his parlor, in long nights of infinite wisdom, unfiltered Camels in his soundless mouth, his eyes going into a semi-roll as he watched the smoke flare from his nostrils and waft toward the ceiling. But Carey the son, himself a mostly silent man, suspected that his father's philosophy was less calculated than a justification for a natural muteness over which he had no control. That his mother was only moderately verbose heightened the effect. She took her cue from her husband. At some point in her life she had just gotten tired of talking and not being answered. They had both gone to the grave without much change in their general dispositions.

The older Carey gets, the more he feels that wordlessness is the way to go on with things. His lack of children, and his wife's declining state, only reinforce this conviction. After many days over the past few years he has slid under the bedcovers at night and, in a recounting of the day that smoothes his passage to sleep, has realized he has uttered not a single word. How amazing that seems. At the end of these lean days he feels no sense of loss.

How his brother got to be such a motormouth is a genetic mystery. Or perhaps Tommy has come to fill a necessary role, leavening the family pall. His presence oozes into the voids. He became a raconteur early on, despite their father's proclamations that talkers were fools. The family tenement seemed to be Tommy's rehearsal stage. Often, as a boy, Carey had passed Tommy and his pals, at the park or in front of the old Pleasant Street Drug Store, and heard from Tommy's mouth the same monologue he had heard at supper the night before—but polished and tightened now, the timing and delivery down.

Yes, Tommy has done well in this respect; he is always bent toward the ear of one of the local pols, always griping and grinning at their fundraisers and their public appearances. But is this the way for a grown man to conduct

himself? Carey, despite his lowly station as a laborer in the mills of Fall River, can't help seeing that political crowd as nothing more than boys in arrested adolescence. What does Tommy want, and how will he get it? Carey remembers the nasty business of kickbacks on construction of the city high school, and Tommy's sudden public persona, denying charges with an arrogant and winning smile. The school was built, and Tommy moved out to his big new house, unbloodied. What a piece of work. What a talker. Is he really from the same family?

Carey wonders this now, on this morning of the Fourth of July, 1978, as he sits with his coffee at the kitchen table, waiting. He has on a pair of wool pants (half of the only suit he has ever owned) and his white shirt, which has hung unmolested in the closet since Christmas, when they went out to Pittsfield to visit Joyce's cousin. Now he feels its starchy constitution moistening in the heat of early day. The coffee is tepid, from sitting; he goes to the refrigerator, fishes two ice cubes out of the aluminum ice tray, and dumps them into the cup, and adds sugar. He has already gone down to the corner variety store for his newspaper, which lies before him. He has been through the sports pages twice, and now he's getting edgy.

"Joyce," he calls. "How are you coming along?"

"Yeah, I'm fine."

Fine. He flashes his mind forward to the end of this day, which he understands will consist of too many dredged words, too many forced remarks. He thinks of tonight, when he and Joyce can pull chairs up to the kitchen window, turn out the lights, and watch the fireworks soar over the adjacent roof line. Small traditions. The closeness of the park makes the kitchen a perfect vantage—so close that the booming finale always makes the windows vibrate in their frames. But that will be later, across the chasm that will be this day.

Tommy called at seven this morning, proposing an outing, a drive in his new Chrysler to points undetermined. When Carey tried to put him off, Tommy said—low, as if he didn't want someone there to hear—"Hey, we have to. How would it seem if we didn't do anything with Joyce before, you know?"

"I know," Carey said. "I know."

So they're coming, any time now. He sits, waiting for Joyce to finish with her makeup, which has become, in the past few months, a mask to maintain the veneer of health. But when he told her, she seemed to think this drive was a good idea. To get out, to do something.

He hears the beep of a car horn outside, and then Tommy's unmistakable voice, in comic falsetto: "*Oh, Bernard!*" It's the same call Carey grew up with, the half-demeaning summons that had seemed a reaction, so far back, to his stalled fighting career. In those teenage years Tommy had seemed troubled as attention shifted from himself briefly to his brother; he had quickly gotten into the habit of needling Carey in the many tender places. "*Hey, Bernard,*" he'd sing, "those guys punch some smarts into you yet?" "*Hey, Bernard,* aren't you getting tired of the taste of leather?" He continued to needle, probably just out of habit, even after Carey quit fighting. Now, as always, he is calling "*Bernard*" in that singsong way. But Carey doesn't care anymore.

He goes to the window and waves. The car, black and gleaming, is double-parked. "That'll be hell to keep clean," Carey shouts down. Tommy, in sunglasses, calls back up: "Yeah, take your time. We got the AC going here."

Carey moves to the bedroom door. Joyce is sitting on the end of the bed, looking at herself in the mirror over the dresser.

"Joyce, they're here."

"Oh." She looks at him. "Okay."

She's wearing a tan dress that he remembers as having once been tight on her. She stands up, adjusts her hair with a quick motion, and smiles blandly. "Okay," she says again.

The drive turns out to be to a house that Tommy and Ellen are thinking of buying as a rental property. Tommy already owns three triple-deckers, although he has put two of them back on the market. This is a duplex, Tommy says, just a minor stop on a carefree day. The kids are along, Tommy in the front seat between his parents, Margaret in back between Carey and Joyce.

Tommy controls the conversation, telling stories of past Independence Days. Carey feels himself relaxing, now realizing that all that will be required of him is a few well-placed words of assent, of acknowledgment, to keep the ball rolling. Tommy goes into a long-winded recitation of the time the two of them, as boys, had spent two days after the Fourth collecting unexploded firecrackers, slitting them, and accumulating the gunpowder in a baby-food jar.

"Remember that, Bernard? What were we—you eight? Me ten? We filled that jar halfway up and spent all morning walking around with it, out in the sun. Unbelievable. I mean, why not just put hand grenades in our pockets, right? Didn't we drop it?"

"You did," Carey says. "On Brayton Avenue."

"Oh, shit, that's right," Tommy says. "We're walking, and my hands were getting sweaty, and I drop this jar of gunpowder, and it goes, like, *bonk!* and rolls into the curb. Joyce, we decided to go swimming then, down at Stafford Pond, so we put the jar on a rock in the noonday sun! We're out there swimming, and like, *POW!* Remember that, Bernard?"

"I remember," Carey says. He remembers clearly: the flinch and turn he did as the jar exploded. A piece of flying glass had caught him above the shoulder blade, embedding itself in the soft flesh. He remembers, too, how Tommy, scared that their father would punish them, removed that bloodied shard with the tip of his penknife. Yes, he remembers exactly that sharp sting in his back, this many years later. "Did we ever tell Dad about that?" he asks.

"Are you kidding?" Tommy says. "Never." Joyce looks at Carey and manages a wan smile. Ellen, in the front seat, turns and looks at Joyce and then at Carey. A look of worry and fright.

At the end of a wooded street they slow to have a look at the duplex. Tommy dismisses it as of no interest and guns the car into a swerving U-turn, announcing that business should give way to pleasure. He gets on the interstate and takes the bridge out toward Providence.

"Feel this," Tommy says.

Carey doesn't understand. "Feel what?" he says.

"That's exactly what I mean," Tommy says. "You don't feel anything. No sense of motion. Is this ride smooth? It's like we're standing still. What do we think, Joyce?"

She looks mildly startled, like a daydreaming pupil suddenly called on by the teacher.

"Pardon?"

"The car," Tommy says. "You like it, Joyce?"

"It's nice."

"Bernard?"

"Beautiful, Tommy. It feels like we're standing still."

"Yeah, well we're not," Tommy says.

Carey looks out the window. Indeed, the landscape is hurtling by.

Joyce sits again in the waiting room of the doctor's office, passing time as she always passes time when she comes here to be examined. The waits are always long. Hour upon hour, it seems, a mounting fraction of her life. As the future grows short and the news less promising, how is it that this place takes up more of her time? But there is the air conditioning. She sits wedged into the end of a hard couch, scanning magazines, not worrying about when she will be summoned to the doctor. If she weren't here, she'd be lying on her bed in this demonic heat, with a wet washcloth across her forehead and over her eyes, her cool shroud. So she's here instead. She has spent the past year overcoming her fear of this small space, of the attenuated flow of time as she sits jangly and watchful, waiting

for her name ("Mrs. Carey?"), and of the horrible sense that something just beyond the temporal horizon, something she has to wait for, will determine ultimate outcomes. She remembers once, years ago, when Carey went nuts and bought a forty-dollar block of raffle tickets on a car, and how he said to her, "By tonight we could be driving a Lincoln," and how she thought of the bridge of hours that had to be crossed to get to that moment (which of course turned out to be disappointing). Now, here, the issue is remaining comfortable. The doctor will sit with her and ask the questions he has to ask: Any discomfort? Can I give you something for the pain? Despite all the waiting in the outer office, these visits are down to three or four minutes, extended handholding. Plans have been made for what will happen when she has to go to the hospital. Her paperwork is done, waiting in some drawer.

Across from her, on the opposite wall, is a framed print of a famous painting she recognizes but cannot identify. The colors lean toward dark, and the glass silvers in the fluorescent lights overhead. She can see her reflection. Her hair. It had been a light brown all her life, and when it fell out, she took a tuft, put it in a sandwich bag, traveled to Providence on a bus, and bought a wig that, although cheap and obvious, at least approximated her color. Then her hair grew back, but it wasn't her hair. It was steely-gray, wiry and severe, and just not hers. This neither shocked nor upset her. She has mentally catalogued all the things in her life that are done with and irretrievable; this is just another one. She is only a little beyond thirty, yet gray-haired and aged. She wore that wig for a long time, until the summer heat made it impossible.

Her husband has stopped taking days off to accompany her. He has used up all his sick time on her sickness. She told him months ago that he might as well stay at work. They need the money. She takes the bus alone and then eats at the Woolworth's lunch counter, chicken salad on lightly toasted white bread, with cole slaw. Then she walks slowly down South Main Street toward her doctor's office, relaxing so as not to sweat too much and induce a chill while she's waiting. She knows that if she's a bit late, no one will mind.

Her parents are dead. She has a sister who went out to Illinois five years ago; their correspondence thinned and then disappeared altogether. In the doctor's office she often sees women like herself encumbered with stunned and worried mothers, or with children already hardened to these deadening trips, beyond worry and in the process of readjusting the way they understand their own lives. Joyce has no children. She is glad, because she can think of no greater worry than leaving a child in life's hard light while giving oneself up to the void. She has told this to Father Casey, told him as she crouched in a dark confessional on a cold winter's day, and she could tell by his silence that he was thrown off by the truth of this thought.

How odd, though. After all the years during which her

reproductive workings lay dormant, why were they so coldly efficient at producing this contorted fruit? Her stomach has been swelling for months. This is, the doctor says, an "aggressive" cancer. People who don't know her think she's pregnant.

She waits to be called. She waits to tell her story, although she knows her story is nothing special. The nurse behind the window smiles and then returns to her charts. All so nice. These people have become friends, in a way, as have a few other patients she has come to know by their frequent and proximate appointments. She knows their faces and stories, but rarely their names. Then, one day, a new person is filling the appointment slot.

It's a Thursday. By the time she gets home and has a rest, he'll be coming in, reforming his energies for his softball game. Sometimes, lately, he'll tell her about it when he gets back, if she is awake that late. His enthusiasm reminds her of when she was first sick, when her illness was an *opponent*, when they tried together to understand the treatments the doctors had laid out for them, when they became conversant in the ways malignancies were attacked and battered. They hadn't understood; neither of them had ever been good at that sort of thing. But they had fed on the excitement and the unrelieved dread.

She tries not to wonder how far forward he imagines his life. Does it stretch into old age, into stages beyond her scope, like constellations not visible to her? So be it. He has to, she supposes.

When she is called by the nurse, and led to the examining room, she goes without much feeling either way. She expects the usual prodding and movements—"This way, please. And now the other."

She encounters the usual talk, the writing of prescriptions. She is left alone to dress, and she takes her time. On her way out of the office she says her good-byes. At the glass door to the sidewalk, where people hurry past in the heat, she lingers, if only for a minute or two, to savor the undemanding coolness of this place.

The Red Sox are playing a two-night doubleheader tonight. Carey has brought his radio to the kitchen table and turned it on low, so that he can hear it as he eats. It's a little past six. He stares at the small speaker as if it were a television.

Eating, he finds he can't meet his wife's eyes. Joyce is sitting across from him, her hands folded on the table, but he eats as he would if she were not here at all. He has known, from the moment he came up the back stairs and through the door and found her dressed and seated in the living room, that she prepared herself all day to talk about "the future." For weeks she's been saying, "We have to talk about the future," but what she means, of course, is *his* future. That's what they need to plan, and he isn't nearly ready to get into it with her.

He eats fast, mechanically, taking down the lasagna that she has baked but won't eat. He knows she won't, but still he looks up at her and points his fork at her food and says, "Eat."

"I'll eat some after you go to softball," she says. He knows that she'll scrape the food into the garbage pail after he leaves.

"We should talk about the insurance," she finally says. He wants to say to her, *Why?* The insurance amounts to almost nothing. He can already envision the medical bills stretching out over the years, infinitely. She said to him once, "I can't stand thinking you'll have to carry that on your back." But he sees it differently, preferring to think that those offerings will connect him to her for a long time after. He shouldn't get out of this so easily. He has to be punished for being well while she disintegrates in front of him.

"We don't have to talk about all that now," he says. "Why don't you try to eat? It's good." He hasn't much to say. Because they have no children, they have never had more than a vague feeling of anticipation about how a child might make things different. They've never lived in a house they owned. Carey feels in himself the fundamental failure of her two miscarriages, whatever his contribution to those tragedies. Here she is, dying in a dingy place. He has given her nothing.

But now she's pressing him, and despite her condition and her suffering, he is beginning to feel annoyed. A few nights ago she wanted to talk about her funeral. He got angry, convinced that this was somehow none of her business. He knew she wanted to lobby for the cheapest way; he had tried to joke. "You don't get off that easy," he said. "Joyce, you're being way too dramatic. Someday they'll call you Widow Carey."

"Yeah, right," she said, and she allowed a slight smile, and that was the end of it, temporarily.

"We can't just keep putting all this off," she says now. He leans into the radio and hangs on the progress of the first inning as if absorbed by its importance. She sits quietly, waiting.

"We don't have to talk about it," he says.

He doesn't want to talk because any talk will involve lying about things. She doesn't know that he has already called on his brother for a loan to cover the arrangements.

He met Tommy at a bar, the Sportsman's, a week before. The phone call Carey placed to Tommy's office divulged nothing specific, but he knew that Tommy would have a pretty good idea what it was about. Indeed, at the Sportsman's, Tommy (fat with his construction company, and with his politician friends) listened grimly and then took a thick sheaf of bills from his wallet. "Anything you need, Bernard," he said, and Carey was caught off guard by Tommy's easy generosity and by the vulgarity of the money being waved around.

"Jesus, Tommy, she's not dead yet," he said. "Put your

money away. I'm going to call you when I need it. Maybe she'll get better."

Tommy looked him hard in the eyes. "It would be a lovely miracle, wouldn't it?"

Carey slurped the top off his beer and said, "Yeah, it's not going to happen."

He hadn't seen Tommy in a year, and for two years before that time. Tommy has built a place in a rustic pocket outside the city, past Mechanicsville. Oh, the ironic trajectories. He would never have guessed that Tommy, only two years older and perpetually in scrapes as a kid, would find a way to build his own company and be out there calling the shots.

Carey drove by Tommy's new house once, on a summer evening a year ago, on his way to fish a lake with Machado, from the mill. He saw the fresh-cedar place in a graveled clearing among firs, with a battered pickup truck in front, ladders laid across the topframe, and a new station wagon next to the truck. Tommy had started out as a fighter too, but with his height he'd made middleweight; he was hired in his first construction job to herd and break some of the laborers. Then he made some friends, particularly politicians. Tommy frequently attended "times" for nascent officeholders. This could not have hurt.

At the bar Carey leaned toward his brother and said, "Not a goddamned word about this to Joyce," but he knew the chances of any such leak were remote. Their parents were long dead, their sister lived somewhere up in Maine, and the only family gathering that might occur would be an accidental encounter at a supermarket or on a downtown sidewalk. But Joyce spent more and more time tethered to their apartment, afraid of vomiting in public or of losing her legs underneath her; so even a chance encounter was unlikely.

At the end of their talk, outside the bar, Tommy said, "How long has she got, Bernard?"

Carey took a while to answer. "I don't know," he said. "Into next year, maybe. She might see the spring."

"That's too bad," Tommy said.

"Yeah," Carey said. "I'll see you."

Now, as Carey forks through his lasagna with his wife staring at him across the table, he sees no point in going through a matter already settled.

"How long do you have before you go?" Joyce says.

"Not long. I have to get down there early to make sure everything's set. Maybe we can talk when I get home."

She says nothing.

"I'd better be on my way," he says. He flicks off the radio and stands up. "You're going to eat, right?"

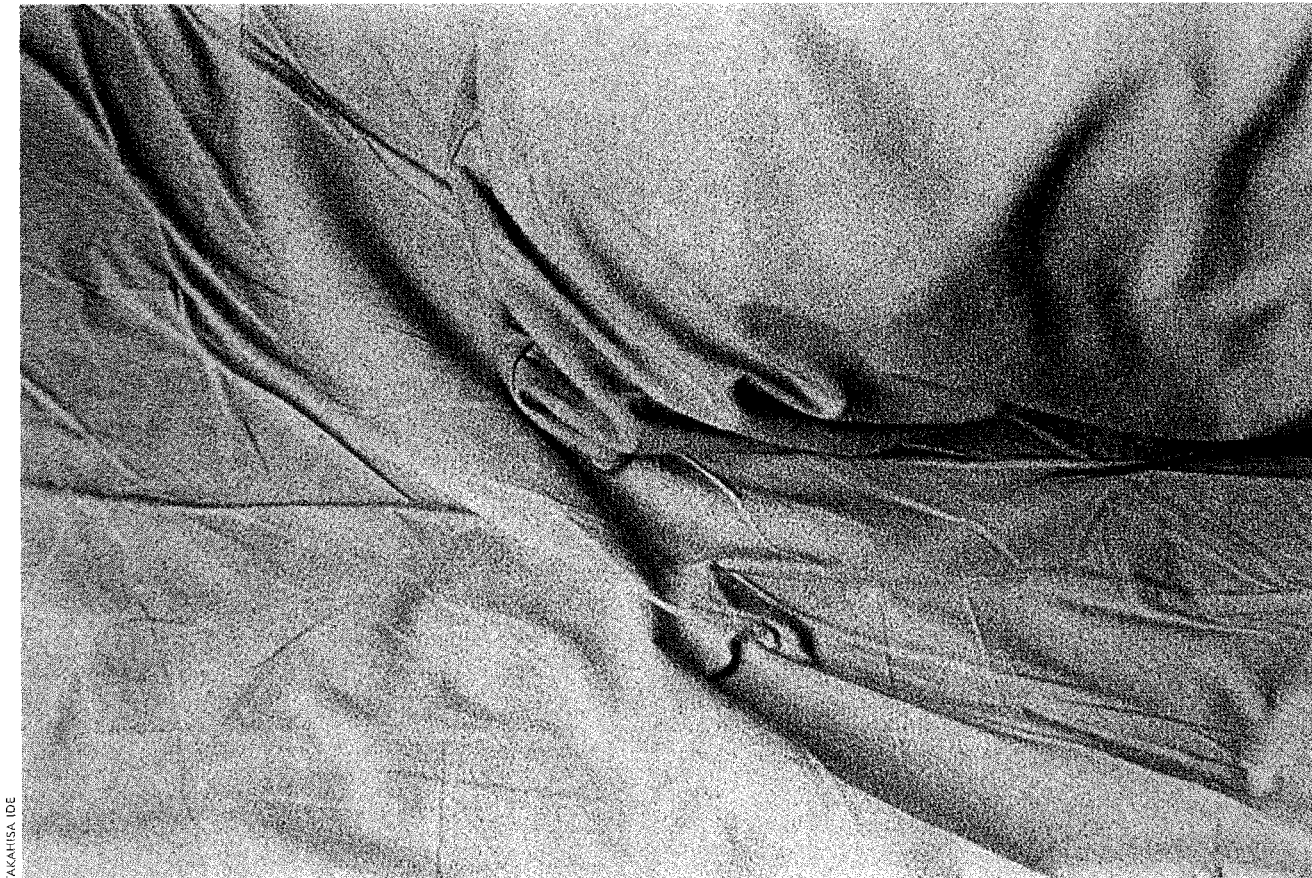
"In a little while."

"You have to eat, right? You can't just not eat, right?"

"I know."

"Okay, then. I'll see you later."

"Okay."



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"Eat," he says.

"I will."

Out the door and down South Main toward the park, he knows he should be home with her. But what would they do? He's afraid that his memory of their waning time will become a frozen image of them staring at each other, searching for words.

Halfway to the park he's thinking about the team. He has found himself becoming more and more obsessed with the season, even more than he used to be. He wants to be lucky, the way he wanted to be lucky when she had her first, all too brief, remission. That kind of luck can't be wished for now. Fall and winter will bring breakdown and lingering death. Summer of next year, he imagines, will be a different life altogether. He wishes her the luck of a painless end. She is not yet at that point, but he can see the grim inevitability of it. He can see the constant small lapses that will grow and compound.

Lying in bed as the clock's phosphorescent hands creep toward three, Carey watches the slow rise and fall of his wife's back, edged in the weak light, barely perceptible in its actions. He wants to wrap his arm around her and pull her toward him, but she won't like being awakened; she hadn't liked it even when she was well. She has always kept a fundamental separateness, and he wonders if that is something only between them, or something

that most people experience. She has her silence, now and waking, the odd way she has begun to be like him. They have so little to talk about, except the dry actuality of now: How was work, what did the doctor say, et cetera, et cetera. The future is not a frame for conversation, because of its obvious irrelevance to her. He can't bring himself to talk about the past, either, with its heavy sense of summing up: *Remember when we ... ?*

He knows he should, but he can't. He is trying so very hard not to think of the past or the future. But most nights he can't sleep, and he wonders how she can. Does the sickness anesthetize her? Or is she past worry? He can't ask her. He is afraid he will scare her. So tonight he is still, watching the metronomic rise and fall of her back, wondering what things he will forget and what he will always remember.

They married young and found an apartment on Division Street, a place with yellow walls and loud neighbors. Joyce was twenty and didn't want babies yet. She was so glad to be out of her parents' home and in a place that was really hers, she said, that she had to first get over the feeling of playing house, the feeling that the game would end and she'd have to go back. They paid ten dollars a week for the place; cars roared by outside at all times of the night. They'd lie in bed listening to the close sounds of quarrels, the slamming of doors, shouting from the street. It didn't matter, at least for then.

She went to her parish priest, Father Mac, who instruct-

ed her in the rhythm method, although he clearly knew more about other things, such as hockey. Carey trusted her expertise on this, but he found himself in the drugstore buying a big box of rubbers. He needed to feel safe from too many responsibilities too soon. When he came home, put the paper bag on the table, and extracted the box, she hooted. "Whoa!"

He laughed and said, "What?"

"Nothing," she said, and she laughed some more.

The box was emptied in no time. He had just started at the mill. Each day he worked himself into a sweet exhaustion and then nearly ran home to get to her. On summer nights they'd make love in the late light and then dress and

take a bus downtown. On South Main was a place called Guy's that had wonderful ice cream, slabby stuff that crumbled under the press of their tongues. They felt like they needed that ice cream, and they would sit nearly every night on a bench at the bus stop, waiting for their return ride, watching the sun drop on the bay, sighting down the narrow gap along Rodman Street.

She liked to talk about the past and the future all at once sometimes, and he liked to listen, really liked it, not to humor her but in earnest appreciation of her talkativeness, the excitement she found in small moments. He thought it was a big change from his parents' steely self-restraint, and even from Tommy's silken ramblings, which always arrived finally at a price to be exacted from the listener. Joyce demanded nothing in return, not even his full attention; she just liked talking. She was still in the spell of loamy possibilities then. She gave their children names, and laid out a whole line of them in stories that seemed like recollections. He didn't have to say anything, and didn't.

"The first one is Bernard, of course, named after you," she would say. "The next one is a girl, Mary Margaret ..." He'd grin, and she'd see it, and she'd be off on a tear, for his amusement and discomfort, until their lives were filled: "... and then Matthew and Marty, the fraternal twins, and little Colleen ..." He'd laugh some more and try to cover her mouth with his hand, and she'd bite it, gently. The next day or the next week she would rearrange the names, the order, the characteristics. The oldest became Molly, flame-haired and demanding. The youngest of the five was Billy, who sucked his thumb too long and required expensive orthodontia. Billy the baby, with his wailing fits in the crib, next time became Sally, an angel, really.

But in that yellow-walled apartment they never consciously moved toward any such fruition. They had friends who, couple by couple, became parents, more often than not without trying. Carey assumed, as Joyce must have, that the time would come when she would be pregnant, despite their precautions. And when she did not become pregnant, they congratulated themselves on their expert execution of the rhythm method, and on the fine imperviousness of modern latex. Somewhere along that line of years Carey began to wonder what would happen if they tried and couldn't.

He noticed that their sprawling, fictitious family began to shrink in Joyce's telling. Now when she spun out her prognostications, there were four children, and then three, and then only Steven and Suzy, a year apart and good playmates. Then it was young Jack, an only child, but able to have the room of his own his parents had never had.

One night, somewhere along that continuum of years, they walked to Guy's for ice cream and then, as always, sat staring at the glint of visible water. This time they had come over right after eating dinner; like most people years into married life, they were beyond some of the novelty, willing to arrange their lives around other moments. That evening

THE OTHER WORLD

So here is the old buck
 who all winter long
had traveled with the does
 and yearlings, with the fawns
just past their spots,
 and who had hung back,
walking where the others had walked,
 eating what they had left,
and who had struck now and then
 a pose against the wind,
against a twig-snap or the way
 the light came slinking
among the trees.

Here is the mangled ear
 and the twisted, hindering leg.
Here, already bearing him away
 among the last drifts of snow
and the nightly hard freezes,
 is a line of tiny ants,
making its way from the cave
 of the right eye, over the steep
occipital ridge, across the moonscape, shed-horn
 medallion and through the valley
of the ear's cloven shadow
 to the ground,
where among the staves
 of shed needles and the red earthy wine
they carry him
 bit by gnawn bit
into another world.

—ROBERT WRIGLEY

he ate his ice cream not thinking of anything in particular. She looked at him until he looked back.

"Do you think it's time for us to try for kids, really try?" she said.

"I think so," he said. "Sure."

And so his life with her shifted into what he would finally come to see as the second of three parts. They knew that their small apartment was unsuitable. Through that fall of their sixth year of marriage they began to look for a new place. Joyce would ask about the schools; Carey's thoughts would shift to Mary Margaret reciting a poem, or to young Billy scrapping in the schoolyard. When they finally arrived at the right place, fifteen dollars a week, upstairs from the Oliveiras and the insistent fragrance of baking bread, they declared themselves ready. The supply of rubbers was allowed to dwindle (ignoring them somehow seemed like wasting money), and after two months they began to feel that their task might not be so easy. After six months he could see that she was on the edge of panic, and when they signed to renew their lease for another year, he felt stunned that they were still childless.

Neither Carey nor Joyce had been to a doctor since they were children. Now they entered the terrain of office visits and tests and weekends nervously killed off in anticipation of the Monday call with lab results, which were brutally consistent. Of course they weren't completely shocked; the thought of infertility had crept into his mind some time before. Their friends had reached a point—three kids, four—where they announced each conception with rising disgust. One went into money panic for weeks when he learned he would have another mouth to feed. Carey and Joyce understood this as a problem they would never suffer. He began to push away thoughts of his anticipated children, not allowing them to play long on the vast fields of his mind. Their wraithlike voices came to him when he was on the cusp of sleep, petitioning him, demanding their due passage to flesh. In the morning he would walk to work muttering back at them to stop it.

They were in their late twenties and would not have children. Carey decided that he could live with this.

What seemed far more stunning, on a day when he stood stacking boxes in the mill, was that he had been there nearly ten years, the past nine at minimum wage plus a dime. That, too, had suddenly formed into the shape of his future. Was it so bad? Had he ever wanted more? He couldn't remember ever having any definite ideas. Tommy carried the family's thin strain of virulent opportunism. It seemed foreign yet somehow laudable. Tommy had money, a big house, a nice car. He had acquired these with the mouth, motored by a completely average mind, maybe even below average. He used his mouth to batter people, to wear them down.

Joyce had spent all those years working on and off as a temp, typing and filing, usually at minimum wage. They got

by, in their small apartment, with their one car and their careful spending. They demanded so little. That was what he remembered her saying, the night after they had come from a new round of doctor's visits, this time for pains in her stomach, and they had found out exactly how sick she was. The doctor kept telling her that if she had only come to him earlier, he might have been able to do something. Carey suspected, but felt he could never ask her, that she had ignored this sickness because they already had so many bills. The doctor said, "Weren't you in pain?" and when she looked at the doctor and just shrugged, Carey knew. They got home that night in December at dinner-time, but they weren't in a mood to eat. For a long time they sat at the kitchen table with their winter coats on. She sat as if completely calm. She pushed back a loose strand of her light brown hair. When she looked at him, only her eyes, their glazed shock, gave her away. She quietly said, "What did I ever ask for?"

The question begged no answer. He did not speak. He knew that would become a memory someday, her asking that. He knew that, all in all, she had never really asked for anything. He wondered if she should have.

Carey tries the big oak door at the front of the church. It's closed, so he goes around the side, trying every door he comes to and finding each one locked. He supposes a prayer is just as good outside as in, but he has come to get down on his knees, and he thinks a person who needs to should find a way. Around back, now sure that he's locked out, he tries a little door between the shrubs, and it gives. When he steps into the dark, his foot at first touches nothing, and he lowers himself, realizing that he's on a steep stairway into the basement. He works his way down, and at the bottom he feels his way along a wall until his hand hits a light switch. When he flips it, he sees that all around him are the effects of the religion he has avoided for so long. The dusty forest of candlesticks and crucifixes and kneelers gives way to a hall and then another staircase, and when he comes up through, he is in the sacristy. He finds another door onto the chancel, and when the edges creak from parting, the echo bangs through the nave and into the arches. He lets his eyes adjust to the one altar candle that flickers in its red glass. He is at the side altar, and he moves toward the center, feeling along the marble altar rail. He lowers himself onto a red-velvet kneeling cushion that has gone flat, and the hardness of the marble beneath comes right up into his knees, the way it did when he was a boy, when the nuns punished him by making him kneel on pencils and say Hail Marys, so certain of the need for pain as a path to grace. He tries to start a prayer, but the words are all mixed up.

His knees are on those pencils again, and the terror is like a band across his chest. All the things that have been pushed down must be admitted now, must be the source of

whatever plea he is trying to form. He lowers his head and thinks about what he wants.

Then a door flies open, and Carey pushes up to his feet. He is in the fix of a flashlight beam, and someone is behind it, breathing, speaking: "What do you think you're doing?"

"I'm praying," Carey says, his voice flat; it sounds like a lie, even to him.

"How did you get in here?"

"I found a way," he says. "I just needed to ... pray ..."

He is moving toward the back of the church, not quite running, and he calls to the flashlight, "I wasn't trying to make trouble." The footsteps are following him, and he hears them softening, slowing.

"You don't have to leave," the voice says. "I just needed to know what was going on ..."

"That's okay," Carey says as he tries the big door, pulling against its unyielding weight. With his searching fingertips he finds that it's locked with a dead bolt. "It's okay. I'm sorry."

"I'll let you out, but you don't have to go," the voice says.

Carey hears the keys jingling in the dark. The flashlight moves and is turned on its bearer, and Carey sees the priest, the face familiar but the name not. Carey gave up on religion at fourteen; he knows this man from the street, not the sanctuary. The priest is old and small, armed only with his flashlight and his waning indignation. His face is like a blade, and his white hair is cut close to the skin. He is sweating in the heat.

"People break in and steal, amazingly," the priest says. "Nobody's keeping you from making your peace."

"Just let me out," Carey says.

The priest tries three keys before he gets the right one. He holds the flashlight in his armpit while his gnarled hands work through the keys of a hundred solemn locks in this huge church. Even after he has stilled the keys, the jangling resounds up in the arches, faintly, ghosts of the offertory bells. When the priest pushes in the key, he breathes out, because he is as shaken up as Carey. He slides the bolt back and then straightens.

"I don't know what you came asking for, and I won't push to find out," the priest says. "But after all these years, I've come to believe it all boils down to pretty much one answer."

Carey lowers his head.

"It's 'Do your best,'" the priest says, and he smiles sadly. Then he pushes open the door, and Carey is out into the night, into the noise of the traffic. Behind him he hears the big door slam closed.

In some of his close-to-sleep deliberations he imagines robbing a bank and, with his wife and the money, going somewhere. Florida? The bank-robbery scenario somehow calms his guilt. He imagines himself at the trial, in an empty courtroom, explaining himself before being sentenced to prison by a sympathetic yet stern judge. Prison

probably isn't so bad. Some guys he knows have been in prison, and they don't seem so bad off. He sees those guys in the warehouse from time to time, usually young offenders whose parents know the bosses. They don't seem to have minded prison. Who would want to hang around an empty apartment? The robbery scenario answers the main question that plagues him, which is the gnawing uncertainty of what will happen to him.

Joyce stirs and calms. She is looking so old. She is looking so broken, a mechanism of worn gears. And she always used to look younger. Younger than Carey, younger than her actual age. She has gone from being a bashful girl to being a fragile, aging woman. Watching this, he feels the acceleration of their lives; now, for the first time, he is thinking about what he might have let pass him by, what chances have intersected their lives and been ignored. In his years at the mill he has never even applied for another job. Now that he is arranging loans from his brother, he sees he has made mistakes, many mistakes; his biggest has been a too-easy acceptance of the kind of life he was living.

He turns over onto his stomach, and Joyce shifts and reaches back to feel for him. The back of her hand grazes against his leg, and then it goes limp and he can hear her breathing again. He thinks about his hits at that night's game, about his fifth-inning single, which brought Chaves and Murray loping in. He thinks about Chip's home run, the ease of it. He tries vainly to calculate his current batting average. It is somewhere around .360. Not all that bad—not very impressive for slow-pitch, but helpful to the success of the team. He drifts off near sleep, becomes sleepless again, and then drifts off. A few minutes later he opens his eyes. He looks at the clock. It's past two-thirty.

"You're awake," she says, her voice reedy.

"Yes."

"So Tommy's paying for my funeral?"

He waits a long time, and then he says, "It's a loan."

"Oh."

"He wasn't supposed to say anything."

"He never is," Joyce says. "But what's a favor if you can't make a big deal about it?"

"I thought he'd have more respect. How did you hear?"

"I heard," she whispers.

"I didn't think you went out today."

"I go out sometimes."

She shifts, and he feels the lightness of her fingertips on his arm.

And here again he can think of nothing to say. His core silence chokes him, and if there is anything he could say right now, the words don't come to him. He forms a thought, moves to voice it, and falls back. He already knows he will remember this. When he finally thinks of what he might say, he hears her soft breathing and knows she isn't with him anymore, and that she wasn't waiting for anything at all. ▀

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LOOKING ALIVE

The objects around us are becoming more and more like living things

BY THOMAS HINE

.....

Like many members of the Baby Boom generation, I grew up thinking about the human body in mechanistic terms. In elementary school I sat through repeated showings of a film in the Bell Science series, *Hemo the Magnificent*, which depicted the body as a factory staffed by little men who were constantly turning valves on and off, or running from cell to cell like milkmen, delivering oxygen. Even at age nine I knew this wasn't how things really worked. Still, metaphors matter. Those cute little animated workers may not be manning my aorta, but they have stuck in my mind ever since.

In recent years, though, our culture's metaphors about biology and technology have been reversed. Rather than thinking about our bodies in terms of mechanics, we are now encouraged to think about technology as if it were a form of biology. Computer viruses are a good example. And this past April, IBM made front-page news when it announced plans to develop "self-healing" computers, which will analyze their own malfunctions, repair them, and keep working while doing so. Whereas we once thought steel strong and flesh weak, now the steam drill is learning from John Henry.

When metaphors change, it usually means that reality has done so already. And in fact our bodies are filling up with machinery. Pacemakers, knee and hip replacements, eye implants, artificial skin, and even man-made organs are becoming so commonplace that cyborgs—hybrids of human being and machine—are already living in our midst.

But they don't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator*. They aren't supermen; they're only us.

Then, too, there's the Speedo Fastskin wet suit, which was worn by a majority of the top swimmers in the Sydney Olympics last year. This second skin enhances swimmers' performance not by making their bodies smooth—

It's almost impossible to separate the engineering features that make the Fastskin work from its "design"—those qualities of form, texture, and color that make a thing memorable and meaningful. The Fastskin comes close to the ideal that form should follow function. However, most of the time function needs a little help. It falls to designers to make people feel comfortable with technology. Throughout the twentieth century they generally did so by dramatizing an object's benefits—speed, power, and efficiency, for instance—while hiding the things that made the object work. They took the early



the traditional swimmer's strategy. Rather, the fabric of the suit replicates structures found on the skin of a shark, which act like tiny hydrofoils and redirect the flow of water over the animal's body. Although the suit is a high-tech product, its sophistication relies entirely on mimicking biological forms. Swimmers wear the suit because it helps them go faster. The fact that it makes its wearers look as if they just stepped out of a Marvel comic doesn't hurt. With a change of costume a mere human being becomes a shark-skinned superswimmer.

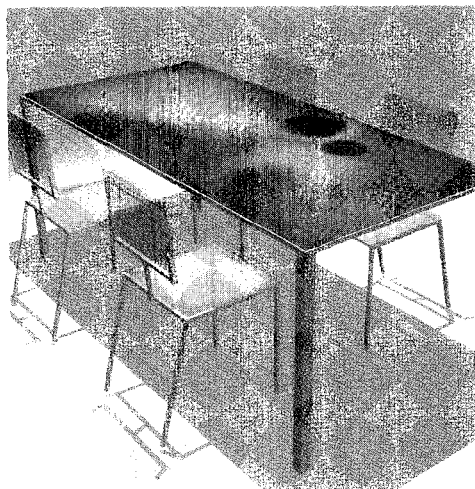
automobile, for example, in which each functional part was visible, and fashioned a steel shell that hid the machinery and gave the car a personality. In so doing they turned a contraption into a convenience.

Sometimes function has little to do with it. There was no practical reason for a 1930s refrigerator to be streamlined, but its new profile turned the erstwhile icebox into an embodiment of modernity and progress. The objects in which form follows not function but fantasy are often the most revealing ones.

IZUMI KOHAMA AND XAVIER MOULIN

During much of the past century designers' principal aim was to encourage people to welcome technology into their homes and their lives. This battle has long since been won. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are accustomed to carrying powerful electronic devices in our pockets. Soon many of us will be wearing them, and before long they may be part of us.

Some of the most sought-after pieces of contemporary personal technology, such as the titanium-clad Macintosh PowerBook and the aluminum-clad Palm V, hark back to twentieth-century notions of hard-shelled competence. But as distinctions between technology and biology blur, glossy, sculptural steel-age objects are being supplanted by forms that are supple, ambiguous, subtly sexy, and even a little bit creepy. The age of inanimate objects—at least those that look and act inanimate—may be coming to a close.



Ellen Lupton, a design curator at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, in New York City, believes that some new designs stand in for living beings, others celebrate the artificial augmentation of the body, and still others reflect anxieties about what may be a hostile merger of human being and machine. She has a computer hard drive full of images of furniture, buildings, clothing, and other products to show what she means. When I visited her recently, at her home in Baltimore, she called up, for instance, a photograph of a robot face that has

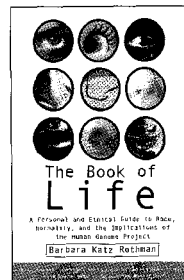
been engineered to signal compassion to those in need of an electronic friend. There was also a very funny drawing of a pair of baggy shorts whose seat inflates to become a stool, and an unsettling image of a chair that seems to support itself on crutches. Lupton has gathered these pictures to prepare for an exhibition titled "Skin: Surface and Substance in Contemporary Design," which is scheduled to open at the museum next April.

"At many times in the past designers have looked to biological or organic forms for inspiration," Lupton told me. "What's different now is that the thinking is less humanist, more cyborg. It's not about creating forms that are comfortable for the body, or of celebrating the natural ... Many women and men nowadays give at least some thought to cosmetic surgery. The idea is to be natural, only better."

The creator of one particularly arresting item recorded in Lupton's files—and of many arresting objects elsewhere—is Karim Rashid, a prolific young designer of furniture, lighting, and other products, who lives and works in New York. Rashid's designs are both respected by his peers and wildly popular. You've probably seen his colorful plastic Carbo wastebasket, but he has also been commissioned by various high-end companies to design everything from champagne glasses to clothing to store interiors. Rashid's Chromazone Table, which caught Lupton's attention, exists only in prototype now, but Totem, a New York gallery, plans to produce and sell it in limited numbers. The table has a high-tech laminate surface, a sort of artistically sensitive Formica top. When you place your hand on it, the heat of your body creates a visible, subtly shaded corona on the tabletop. If you place a steaming mug of coffee on the table, it will generate all the colors in the rainbow. Rashid does not plan to have the table be able to scream if something that threatens permanent damage is placed on it, but no doubt this could be engineered. Even in its silent form, this is a table that lets you know how it is feeling.

Rashid is convinced that almost

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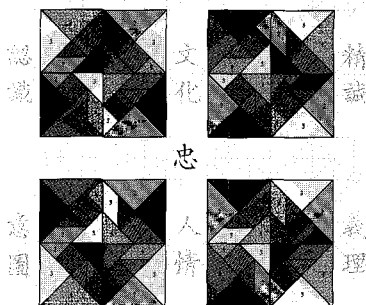
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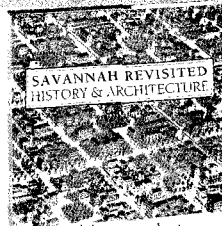
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everything in our lives will soon be "smart," and he is working to make that vision come true, developing designs for a world in which we won't know where the body ends and the machine begins. He designed the table, he told me recently, in order to enable a real-world object to compete with the seductions of the digital world, which he believes have decreased people's sensitivity to what they experience directly. As if to prove his point, our conversation took place by e-mail.

Rashid's table is primitive in responsiveness compared with another project of his that he mentioned: clothing that will react to its wearer's moods, while incorporating temperature controls, databases, and telecommunications capabilities. Much of the technology for such "smart" clothing already exists. As part of a Navy project to create computer-driven body armor, engineers at Georgia Tech have found a way to knit a flexible computer into the fabric of a shirt. The version of this Smart Shirt that has been licensed for production uses its computer power to monitor its wearer's health and location, and it is being marketed primarily to police and fire departments for officers on duty.

Its information-storage and data-processing capacities could potentially be used to make people into walking libraries, with vast amounts of information even closer than their fingertips. Already about a thousand technicians who work for Bell Canada, Federal Express, and other companies are wearing sophisticated computers designed as vests, complete with tiny head-mounted display screens positioned a few inches in front of their eyes. It seems inevitable that such devices will become less bulky, more powerful, less expensive, and more stylish. The introduction in Europe by Philips and Levi Strauss of a line of wearable electronics—essentially sportswear with wires integrated in the design and special pockets for Philips telephones, digital audio players, and other gadgets that can be operated from a single remote control—suggests that this once visionary idea is moving toward the marketplace.

But perhaps a technologically enhanced second skin will prove to be only a transitional stage. Rashid, for one, believes that the next step after smart clothing will be even more amazing: smart people. "I see technology being embedded in our bodies so that we become digital within ourselves," he said. "We can interface by touching our skins, almost like having keyboards and chips planted under our skin—or by neural-triggered synapses where our minds control the technology and devices." Implants are, after all, the ultimate portables.

The mind boggles. The body shudders. The stomach turns. The next time I upgrade my computer, I wonder, will it involve surgery?

But since I'm old enough to remember *Homo the Magnificent*, I'm old enough to remember those who predicted that I would be running to the supermarket in a helicopter and that my front porch would be equipped with a ray that could kill any germs that threatened to cross the doorstep. There is a long tradition of overselling the future, and those who call themselves visionaries—designers prominent among them—rarely envision that anything will go wrong. A pessimist by nature, I am certain that sooner or later the brilliant mind of the Smart Shirt will start to unravel, the self-healing computer will contract a flu it can't shake, and the color-changing table will turn an ugly shade and stay that way.

Designers can't guarantee that the brave new world will work. Indeed, making things work isn't really their job. What they do is make us feel, help us understand, allow us to sense how things can be useful. Even Rashid, who makes ambitious claims for the role of design in culture, says that designers will be little involved with what he terms "the banalities of problem-solving." Certainly this was true for earlier generations of design visionaries. Their role was not to make the future function but to show where we were going, and to make us feel good about it when we got there. ■

PALATE AT LARGE

RESTAURANT VILA LISA

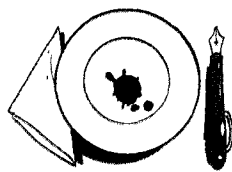
Introducing a new series: restaurants worth building a trip around

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

On any August evening a good part of fashionable Lisbon seems to be waiting outside the glowing yellow-shuttered windows and open door of Restaurant Vila Lisa, in Mexilhoeira Grande, a hill town in the seaside region of the Algarve. During the rest of the year the Algarve, a three-hour drive south of the Portuguese capital, is full of English and German tourists, but in August, Lisboans claim it, and Vila Lisa, for themselves. They might be hankering for a taste of the seafood-based cuisine of the region, which like all great cuisines was born of poverty and ingenuity. But more likely they are going for a taste of home—a kind of rural home that in modern Portugal seems increasingly far away.

This one is guaranteed to be particularly lively, presided over by the artist proprietor, a balding, bearded man named José Vila. Vila's small figure bobs through the bright and merry rooms, lit by overhead lanterns that reflect off the white stucco walls; wine bottles are stacked against one wall, and his paintings, which show the influence of Miró and Tàpies, hang on the others. He darts in and out of conversations with diners, most of whom seem to be friends of his and of one another's—perhaps very recent friends, given that all the tables are picnic tables seating ten. He supervises the young women who keep dishes circulating at a brisk pace. He pulls paintings off the wall to illustrate points he's making and perhaps to attract potential customers—the restaurant doubles as his gallery. He invites people waiting on the street to come inside and pour themselves a glass of wine from a carafe on a marble-topped table beside the big pass-through to the kitchen, where a small, wide woman with the face of Georges de La Tour's fortune-teller dishes food into ceramic bowls.



THE ALGARVE
PORTUGAL

Vila sets beside the carafe a loaf of bread, a knife, and a saucer filled with extremely fruity olive oil. The oil barely covers a big, lightly smashed clove of violet-skinned garlic, and is flecked with what looks like snow crystals but is in fact flor de sal—the local version of fleur de sel, skimmed from salt pans a few miles away, on the Atlantic coast. The waiting customers happily cut off slices of bread and press them into the oil: the Algarve variety of garlic, the oil, and the salt are among the reasons they came.

My dream whenever I arrive in a new place is to happen upon a restaurant that seems like a family party, where the hosts serve the kind of dishes they would ask their mothers to make as a birthday treat. Restaurant Vila Lisa fulfills that dream. Here everyone eats the same thing, so newcomers needn't worry that they won't understand the menu or that they've ordered fancified fare for foreigners rather than what people in the Algarve really eat. Courses simply come out of the kitchen, family style. Conversations start easily at the long communal tables—although Vila doesn't speak English, most of his guests do.

The possibilities consist of about fifteen dishes, whose recipes came from Vila's mother and other relatives he watched cooking while he was growing up. Two or three are constants. Among them is *xarém de berbigão*, a cornmeal-thickened soup containing razor clams or some other seafood caught that day. "We used to think that was so strange, mixing cornmeal and seafood," explained a woman sitting across from me, who had driven several hours to come to dinner at Vila Lisa.

The bread is made in nearby Odi-óxere, baked in wood-fired ovens. These loaves mean business, with a

thick, hard crust and a dense crumb that after a few days will be ideal for bread salad. Chewy and a bit salty, they are reminiscent of Tuscan bread except for the salt.

Joaquim Figueiredo, an ambitious young Lisbon chef sitting at my table, told me that he comes to see his friend Vila about fifteen times a year, drawn not only by the integrity of the ingredients and the cheerfulness of the setting but also by the bread, a loaf of which he always takes home.

The next dish, *raia de alhada*, was his favorite, Figueiredo said: cubes of boiled potato and flakes of boiled skate dressed while the potatoes are warm with vinegar, that powerful oil, and flor de sal. The following course was unobtainable for anyone who does not have fishermen coming right from the boat to the back door: squid with its own ink for sauce, cooked on a cast-iron griddle and seasoned with nothing but a bit of salt and two small chunks of white onion atop the dense black ink. Tender and meaty, this entered my memory bank of definitive tastes.

The only dessert is *queijo de figo*, a torte of dried local figs, almonds, cocoa, *medronho* (the local brandy), and cinnamon. "The Algarve has the best almonds in the world—the ones they planted in California were from here, not from Spain," Figueiredo told me, rising to greet what seemed like the fifth group of patrons from his own restaurant as they headed for the wine carafe. "And the Turks planted our variety of figs. But no one knows how good our products are—it's hard even to get a good salted almond in Portugal. Can you believe it?"

I was listening, but a bit distracted. Vila had already wrapped a loaf for Figueiredo to take home, and had dropped it off on his rounds. I intended to take one home myself. ▀

Restaurant Vila Lisa, Mexilhoeira Grande, Faro, Portugal. Telephone 011-351-282-968-478 or 011-351-282-799-479. Reservations accepted. Open nightly in July, August, and September, and Friday and Saturday nights during the rest of the year. Cash only. Dinner is 4,500 escudos (about \$20) per person.



MANNERS

PENNY-WISE

Thrift, stinginess, eccentricity, and tact

BY MARY KILLEN

.....

As the early-twentieth-century wit Logan Pearsall Smith observed, the rich would never be so stingy were they aware of the pleasure their stinginess gives their friends.

Take the late tenth Duke of Northumberland, who stayed each July of the 1970s at Milton, the family seat of the Earls Fitzwilliam and the house on which Daphne du Maurier modeled the interior of *Manderley*. The visit was always timed to coincide with the Peterborough Royal Foxhound Show, the highlight of the year for fox-hunting folk, in which the hounds of the various packs are compared and contrasted in a canine beauty contest. The Duke had his own hunt, the Percy, and his own pack of hounds. He vastly enjoyed this great annual event, at which the custom of bowler-hat wearing is still observed. For the supporters of the show there

was an official lunch, for a nugatory sum. However, the old Duke was never among those to be seen enjoying the camaraderie of the marquee. Not long ago a family friend told me admiringly, "He was far too stingy to shell out for lunch. He would ask the Milton butler to give him a packed lunch, which he would eat in his car. It became an absolute tradition. 'Here are His Grace's sandwiches,' the butler would say as the party left Milton for the show."

In this way Northumberland was the soul mate of the Texas oil billionaire H. L. Hunt, who always took a bag lunch with him. Other self-made men have discovered their own ways to be thrifty. Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, famously drove an old pickup truck that he refused to replace. J. Paul Getty had a pay phone installed in the foyer of his mansion. To be fair, let it be said that Getty

himself found it inconvenient to make international calls when staying with friends; he always wanted to pay his hosts back, but doing so was embarrassing.

Often, in fact, if you look closely, you will see the reasons for stingy behavior on the part of people with no need to be stingy. Cyril Connolly was, reportedly, once stopped by Somerset Maugham as he left the latter's Villa Mauresque, at Cap Ferrat. Maugham made him open up his suitcase, wherein was revealed an unripe avocado, a windfall Connolly had found in the garden. Maugham insisted he leave it behind. Jeremy Lewis, Connolly's biographer, declares that this oft-told tale is untrue—and yet it has a ring of truth about it. Connolly was "a disconcerting guest," the historian Paul Johnson explained to me. "He once used a slice of bacon as a bookmark."

Queen Elizabeth II as a child kept detailed accounts of her shilling-a-week pocket money. When Prince Charles was a boy, he once mislaid a dog leash at their Norfolk estate, Sandringham. The Queen was greatly annoyed and sent him back to look for it, explaining, "Dog leads cost money." The old rich, or experienced rich, know that inattention to details such as dog leashes will be noted and held against them, because it exaggerates the differences between them and other people.

We all prefer relationships without hypocrisy built into them—and hypocrisy readily makes itself at home where there is great financial inequality. A host who has invited people for a cruise aboard his big yacht may be a crashing bore or badly behaved, but how tempting it is for guests to just smile complicitly, perhaps satisfying their consciences by drawling something ambiguous like "You're so eccentric" before tottering below deck in blissful anticipation of retiring to their feather beds with stomachs full of foie gras and Chateau Petrus. How admirable, then, if the rich prefer to weed out hypocrites, spongers, and social climbers at the source by giving them no material incentive to suck up.

When a very well off friend of mine lent a car to a not well off houseguest, who proceeded to crash the car, while

PAUL COX

drunk, on the first day of his stay, my friend made him pay for half the cost of the repairs. She explained at the time, "To have paid all of it, just because we could afford to, would only have made him hate us—particularly because he would have felt his guilt was unabsolved."

As the Roman historian Tacitus observed, "Good turns are pleasing only in so far as they seem repayable; much beyond that we repay with hatred, not gratitude."

Lady Selina Hastings, the biographer of Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford, laments the demise of the late Lord Faringdon, about whom she told me recently, "He ran two enormous country houses, a house in Ovington Square, and a castle in Malta, but was famous for being able to carve a grouse for six and for his keenness on saving on heating bills. One guest was greatly embarrassed when his suitcase burst open on arrival at Buscot as the footman was carrying it upstairs, revealing a cargo of coal intended for his bedroom fireplace."

But one has to wonder if Faringdon actually saw through to some essential truth about his condition. A popular bachelor of my acquaintance has, as they say, looked at life from both sides. Now comfortably established, he says, "The only rich people I know who are happy are the ones who behave as though they are not rich."

I think of the local branch of the Guinness family, the brewing billionaires, who live near me in Wiltshire. All members of the extended family go around in jeans, gardening and farming all day; never throw out a pheasant carcass without making stock from it; put hours of energy into preparing bramble jelly from their hedgerows; and look furious, briefly, if anyone breaks an ordinary wineglass.

The upshot? The money saved goes into a charity that supports worthy causes. Some of them are vast—earthquake relief, for example. Others are more particular, such as a little-known arrangement the Guinnesses have set up in their own village. This provides people to go around to the houses of the elderly who are unable to bend over, and clip their toenails for them. ■

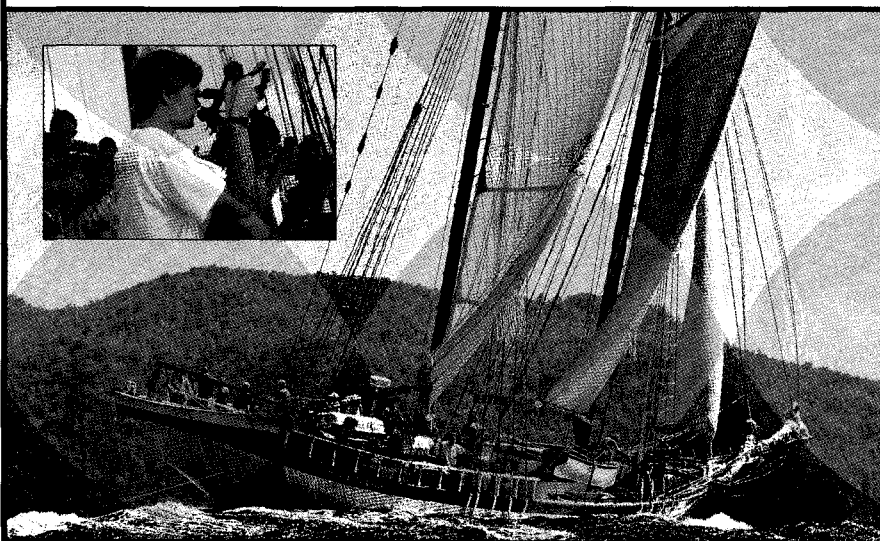
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BOOKS & CRITICS

BOOKS

A BIT OF BUNTING

A new history of the British Empire elevates expediency to principle

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

The greatest books on the largest empire in history were written in a seventeen-year period, from 1959 to 1976. Some of these works, such as Eric Stokes's *The English Utilitarians and India* and R. E. Frykenberg's *Guntur District, 1788–1848*, tackled discrete aspects of the British Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to illuminate large and complex ideas; others, including A. P. Thornton's *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, were sweeping in scope, as was the best of these books, and what I believe to be the best work of British historical scholarship in the twentieth century: Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians*. Nearly all of them were written with verve and precision and were distinguished by a cool and elegant line of argument rare in works of scholarly history. Perhaps for this reason, or because they reached a public that, witnessing the final throes of “decolonization,” was somewhat preoccupied with the subject, these books were read, or at least talked about, by far more people than is usual for such academic works. But since then the study of British imperial history—with some notable exceptions—has become, like so many other fields of historical scholarship, narrower in scope and more concerned with fitting, or forcing, contemporary “progressive” concerns onto the past. It has also attracted more than its share of godawful writers. Reading the British reviews of David

Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* (published in the UK last spring), one of the most widely touted scholarly interpretations of British history in a decade (and showing every sign of being treated as an important and influential book in the United States), I hoped this trend would be reversed.

**ORNAMENTALISM:
HOW THE BRITISH SAW
THEIR EMPIRE**

by David Cannadine
Oxford, 264 pages,
\$25.00

In the United States, Cannadine is probably the most popular serious historian of Britain. A professor at the University of London, formerly at Columbia, he is a smooth and often cheeky writer who has for more than two decades assessed and interpreted British history in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Republic*, and *The New York Times*. No British academic historian today, of course, enjoys the popularity among educated American readers that J. H. Plumb, A.J.P. Taylor, and Hugh Trevor-Roper had in the 1960s and 1970s. But Cannadine comes closest, perhaps because his highly regarded books examine in a sophisticated and often ironic way topics—aristocracy, royalty, and Winston Churchill among them—that appeal to a romantic American anglophilia. His latest book looks at a big subject and interprets it in a manner that both contradicts the prevailing wisdom in academe and is bound to pluck at those anglophilic heartstrings. Not for Cannadine the fashionable notion that the British Empire was, in his words, “primarily concerned with the production of derogatory stereotypes of other, alien, subordinated societies.”

Rather, he sees that empire—albeit in his characteristically arch manner, and using methods and a vocabulary academically *au courant*—in terms very similar to those of that great romantic imperialist Churchill, who loved the empire for its “glitter, pomp and iced champagne.”

Cannadine argues in *Ornamentalism* that in the latter half of the nineteenth century “the British” (by which he means Britain's statesmen, policymakers, and imperial administrators) deliberately “replicated” in their empire the “deeply conservative” and “layered, ordered, hierarchical society” of Britain itself. The empire, he concludes, was “the vehicle for the extension of British social structures” across the globe. Genuinely sympathetic to tradition and aristocracy, the British, he maintains, sought to nurture, sustain, and “celebrate” native aristocracies—princes and landlords in India, tribal chiefs in western Africa and the Pacific, the khedive in Egypt, sheiks in the lands surrounding the Persian Gulf—and their concomitant traditional “Burkeian” societies and ways of life. Thus Cannadine, in what he maintains is a “new and original way” to “understand the British Empire,” declares that it was “not exclusively about race or colour, but was also about class and status.” He continues, in a florid manner befitting the proconsular splendor he lovingly and often wittily describes, “This in turn means that it was about antiquity and anachronism, tradition and honour, order and subordination; about glory and chivalry, horses and elephants, knights and peers, processions and ceremony, plumed hats and ermine robes.”

Cannadine is countering the currently favored view in academe, which is promulgated by a flatulent and often incoherent body of historical and literary scholarship known as colonial dis-



PHOTO OF QUEEN VICTORIA (1893) COURTESY NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

course theory. This scholarship, largely developed from arguments put forth by the literary theorist Edward Said in his enormously influential book *Orientalism* (1978), holds that, in Cannadine's words, "the British Empire was ... concerned with the creation of 'otherness' on the presumption that the imperial periphery was different from, and inferior to, the imperial metropolis." But even as he shuns this academically trendy thesis, Cannadine embraces its methods, approach, and vocabulary. As has become *de rigueur* in scholarly studies of imperialism, Cannadine supports his argument not primarily with documents, official and otherwise, written by policymakers in London and throughout the empire, but with what the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, in a chapter on colonial discourse theory, calls "the [cultural] artefacts of the colonial experience." For Cannadine these include accounts of public rituals, such as *durbars* (elaborate and brassy British-organized ceremonial meetings of Indian princes); the medallions, cum-

merbunds, and befeathered topees that adorned both colonial officials and their native ruling partners; and the honors, awards, and titles of byzantine complexity which the British bestowed on those partners.

Faddish, inelegant—and, worse, imprecise—academic jargon litters his book: "sacrilized," "privileging," "construct," "analogized"; twice he even gives us "analogized back." Most egregious is Cannadine's repeated use of "about," as in the passage quoted above. What does he mean when he asserts that the empire itself, or a method of rule, was "about" this and that? Is he maintaining that these were motivating forces? ("Horses" can't be a motivating force. Can "class"?) His dependence on this word often seems to lead Cannadine to confound flummery and policy, and also ends and means. To argue that the British used ornamental trappings as an instrument of rule is one thing; but to assert that, guided by what he calls their "Burkeian wisdoms and customary conservative modes," British

statesmen and imperial administrators ran their empire as a sort of Colonial Williamsburg writ large, for the purpose of "safeguarding the traditional social order and preserving the traditional way of life" of the peoples they ruled, is quite another.

Traditional historians, even those who have argued that ideas deeply influenced imperial policy, have nevertheless discerned more fundamental and less abstract motives underlying that policy. Stokes, for example, saw that beneath the notions of the philosophers and imperial administrators Thomas Macaulay and James Mill regarding how to rule the Subcontinent, "the tide of British policy in India moved in the direction set by the development of the British economy." In a book ostensibly examining "how the British saw their empire," it is astonishing to find not a single reference to British anxieties regarding the nation's economic vitality or the changing European and global balance of power. Even Benjamin Disraeli, who secured

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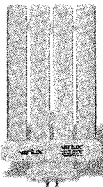
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for Queen Victoria the title Empress of India, and who largely invented the image of a romantic, "ornamental" empire, made clear that one of his primary purposes in promoting his vision of Britain as an imperial state was to enhance its position among the great powers.

In fact, the topics Cannadine addresses in *Ornamentalism* are a good deal less, and also a good deal more, complicated than he would have them. The obvious danger in concentrating on cultural artifacts rather than prosaic documents is that the trappings of power and rule become confused with the realities. The sort of ornaments on which Cannadine builds his argument were, after all, dismissed at the time as nothing more than (in the words of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt) "Dizzy's suit of imperial spangles." Disraeli himself saw the "amplification of titles," which Cannadine describes in loving detail, not as a profoundly conservative expression of Britain's love of hierarchy and admiration for the native aristocracies—as Cannadine insists—but merely as a flamboyant sop: "Orientals," he condescendingly observed, attach "enormous value to very slight distinctions." And Lord Lytton, the conservative viceroy whose elaborately choreographed durbar Cannadine interprets as Britain's homage to India's deeply rooted "feudal order" and to the princes who were both its "expression" and its "apogee," explained the ornateness of that ceremony in pragmatic, rather disdainful terms: "The further East you go, the greater becomes the importance of a bit of bunting."

Cannadine's elevation of expediency to principle and, consequently, his conflation of means and ends is nowhere clearer than in his assessment of "indirect rule"—Britain's regular (but far from exclusive) practice of governing or influencing societies and economies in Africa and Asia through, or in cooperation with, local elites. He explains this method thus:

Since most Britons came from what they believed to be a hierarchical society, it was natural for them, when doing business or negotiating power, to search for overseas collaborators

from the top of the indigenous social spectrum, rather than from lower down ... The British chose the allies they did abroad because of the social conditioning and social perceptions they brought with them from home.

Choosing these local rulers as partners, he maintains, was "about [that word again] admiration rather than condescension ... so as to let tradition thrive and hierarchy flourish."

This is too elaborate. One doesn't have to be imbued with a love of tradition and hierarchy to recognize that it is usually best to "negotiat[e] power" with those who possess it. Nearly every empire in history has when possible maintained and worked through local hierarchies, because that is the common-sense way to run such an enterprise with a minimum of disturbance and expense. In Uganda during the 1890s, for example, twenty-five British officials asserted authority over three million people; absent collaboration with a local elite, in this case the Canda aristocracy, a mere handful of British administrators could never have governed a tropical possession. Far from feeling a sentimental commitment to traditional elites and ways of life, British policy-makers concerned with Africa (where indirect rule was most fully put into practice) would have often preferred to overthrow those elites, who were opposed to the modernization that would have been in Britain's economic (and not infrequently moral) interest to effect, had this not been too expensive and dangerous. Moreover, although pragmatism often dictated that the British collaborate with indigenous elites, the British evinced not the sentimental attachment to local aristocrats that Cannadine sees but, usually, condescension and contempt toward what were often regarded as puppet regimes. The British viewed Egyptian aristocrats, for example, as brutal and ineffectual. And although Cannadine characterizes Britain's "attachment" to Egypt's khedive as "patrician, romantic and escapist," and asserts that the British saw him as one of those "traditional rulers [who] should be sustained and supported," the British in fact ensured that they, through Lord Cromer, the British

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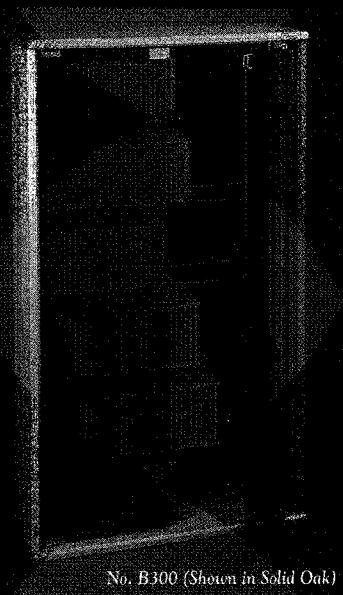
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consul-general and agent in Egypt, controlled the Egyptian state. Their attitude toward the khedive, whom they regarded as a corrupt and incompetent figurehead, was anything but romantic.

But if the indirect methods and ornaments of British imperial rule can be explained in more straightforward and workaday terms than Cannadine suggests, the problems and dilemmas that confronted Britain in its attempts to govern, alter, and stabilize foreign societies were far more complex than he allows. Take his thesis that Britain's was a conservative society, and that the empire was therefore a "traditional enterprise," "built around the principles of replicating and supporting a hierarchical social structure modelled on ... Britain itself." For most of the nineteenth century Britain's individualist, competitive, industrial society and economy were regarded as the most innovative, progressive, and dynamic on earth—Britain was "the new world of the old world," as one foreign observer put it. Mid-Victorian Britons saw themselves as agents of a global liberal awakening. And, indisputably, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries British worldwide expansion—direct and indirect, formal and informal—was an astonishingly efficient and pitiless agent of "social revolution," as none other than Karl Marx recognized in 1853: the spread of Britain's technology, commerce, and industry; its values, religion, and laws; its administrative and fiscal standards of order and efficiency, were responsible for "breaking up the native communities ... uprooting the native industry, and ... levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society."

To be sure, this process is too plain for Cannadine to ignore, and he dexterously anticipates his critics by acknowledging it. But, exasperatingly, although he notes some of the realities that vitiate his overall argument, he makes no attempt to reconcile his thesis to them, save to assert that this process was among the "unintended consequences" of imperialism—suggesting that the British, in their energetic efforts to "let tradition thrive," were blind to it. They were not. Even, for instance, James Fitzjames Stephen, a high official

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in the government of India and one of the most influential voices on Indian affairs in the late nineteenth century (and the future uncle of Virginia Woolf), who opposed schemes aimed at the rapid and wholesale liberalization of Indian society, nevertheless recognized that debate about the desirability of interfering with Indian social habits and religion was largely moot, since the very fact of British rule would engender a social revolution: "The establishment of a system of law which regulates the most important part of the daily life of the people constitutes in itself a moral conquest more striking, more durable, and far more solid, than the physical conquest which rendered it possible." And Sir Alfred Lyall, who, Cannadine incorrectly suggests, cherished Indian society as "Burkeian," "organic," and "an analogue to" Britain's "own carefully ranked domestic status hierarchy," actually clearly understood—and applauded—the fact that British civilization acted on Indian society as a "dissolving force."

To assess Cannadine's book it is essential to understand that the British considered India the indispensable source of their prestige, power, and wealth. Indeed, a very convincing case can be made that the imperative to secure the routes to India largely determined British policy toward Africa, the Middle East, the rest of Asia, and even Europe. India was, to borrow a term dear to the imperialists, the kindergarten of the tropical empire: ideas about the modernization and anglicization of foreign societies and about the universality and malleability of human nature (no less than the methods of rule and administrative techniques) developed there were applied from Cape Town to Cairo and from Fiji to Jamaica.

So Cannadine, rightly, makes India the focal point of his argument, and with its castes and princes, its landlords and peasants, and its viceregal glitter, it is by far his richest seam. But he mines it selectively. By beginning his interpretation of "how the British saw their empire" only after the Mutiny of 1857, and in failing to account for the Mutiny's impact, Cannadine fundamentally mis-

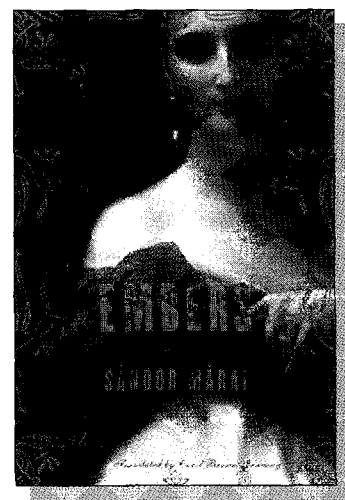
interprets the motives and methods behind imperial policy and administration. If, as he argues, the British saw India as "replicating and reinforcing the layered, time-hallowed social order of the metropolis," then we would expect that the Raj in, say, 1828 was more protective and admiring of tradition and hierarchy than it was in, say, 1898, because Britain itself became far less hierarchical and more liberal over time. (The passage of the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867, by radically expanding the franchise, both fostered and manifested a democratic, anti-hierarchical ethos.) But exactly the opposite is true, as Cannadine knows. Indeed, only by removing his discussion of the Raj from its historical context, and starting in 1857, can he make the facts of British rule in India conform with any plausibility to his general thesis (and even that's a stretch) that the British "rejected the ... view that their overseas rule should bring with it improvement and reform, modernization and progress" and his specific assertion that the British in India "always" sought "the reinforcement and preservation of tradition and hierarchy."

In the first half of the century the Raj was a radical enterprise, not a conservative one. The history of Britain's rule in India crystallized the great question that shaped administration and institutions throughout the non-English-speaking empire: Was it better to preserve indigenous institutions to promote stability, or to anglicize those societies under British rule to modernize them? This debate was far more a reflection of Britons' changing ideas about the extent to which foreign societies could be transformed by British law, education, and religion than it was about any intrinsic desire to preserve aristocracies and celebrate tradition. To be sure, this question had a strong economic basis. Until the end of the eighteenth century the purpose of British dominion in India was to ensure revenue, and expediency and thrift dictated non-interference in native customs, laws, and institutions. With the Industrial Revolution, however, the British came to see India, with its population in the hundreds of millions, as a potentially vast market for their goods.

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This called for what British reformers of India termed the "assimilation" of India to the West; as Macaulay, then a key administrator in that country, explained, "To trade with civilised men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages." But the Victorian liberal and progressive cast of mind, coupled with the evangelical enthusiasm often associated with it, also determined the policy of assimilation. Both liberals and evangelicals believed in the power of ideas and education to transform human nature, and both set about with zeal and confidence to engender what amounted to a revolution—an endeavor that attracted some of the finest and most imaginative minds of mid-nineteenth-century Britain, among them Macaulay, his brother-in-law Charles Edward Trevelyan, and James and John Stuart Mill.

The "regeneration of India," as British reformers repeatedly called their project, encompassed nearly every aspect of Indian life. Among other social and humanitarian measures, they abolished female infanticide, human sacrifice, and suttee; imposed legislation permitting the education of women and allowing Hindu women to remarry; eliminated caste marks among sepoys; and instituted the concept of equality before the law, regardless of caste. All these reforms threatened the very elites and practices that an imperial power aiming to "let tradition thrive" would presumably have preserved.

But most obviously contradicting Cannadine's thesis are those parts of the reformers' program that attacked wholesale and directly the "feudal" and aristocratic aspects of Indian life. Macaulay's system for Western education in India was, the reforming Governor-General Lord Bentinck wrote in 1834, the "panacea for the regeneration of India." Its purpose was avowedly anti-hierarchical: to train a Western-oriented middle class to replace India's traditional leaders. British educational reform created a new social class, "Indian in colour and blood, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect," as Macaulay wrote.

And far from displaying a sentimental attachment to the Indian aristocracy, British reformers, inspired by a Benth-

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mite egalitarianism, sought to destroy it. They dispossessed and suppressed what they regarded as the parasitic landlord class and granted proprietorship to the peasantry, basing their plans for the "regeneration" of India on a newly prosperous class of small farmers as agents of social progress. British reformers focused their revolutionary zeal even more intensely on the Indian princes whose states accounted for nearly a quarter of the Subcontinent. The arbitrary rule and misgovernment of the princes so vexed reformers' notions of justice and efficiency that the Raj aimed at, in the words of Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, "getting rid of those petty intervening principalities." By the 1850s, then, Britain had found its greatest support among Western-educated Indians who had discarded traditional customs and who opposed the traditional Indian elites, and it assumed that it could count on the loyalty of a peasantry it had built up at the expense of the great landlords and whose support and affection it had assiduously cultivated. Britain knew that its fiercest opposition lay in the Brahmin challenged by a new educational system, in the aristocrat deprived of his ancestral lands, in the prince shorn of his state, and in the unemployed courtly retainer. Altogether, this situation is hard to reconcile with Cannadine's assertion that the Raj "always" sought "the reinforcement and preservation of tradition and hierarchy."

Of course, the reformers' project in India was shattered by the fourteen months of ferocious fighting and reciprocal massacres during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Many local factors sparked the rebellion, but it was primarily a reactionary movement that drew its leadership and greatest support from the traditional, hierarchical elements in Indian society—above all the dispossessed princes and landlords—that had suffered most under British rule. No event, not even the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, more profoundly shook the mid-Victorian mind than the Indian Mutiny. It destroyed the confident, careless idealism of Victorian liberals. Fifty years later

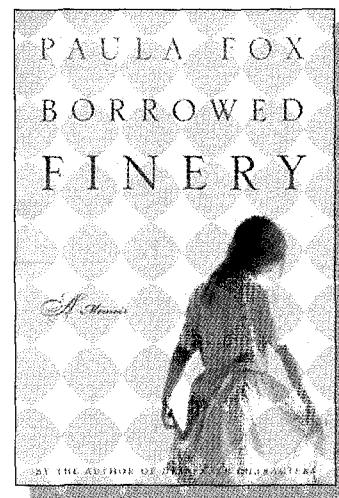
the Duke of Argyll recalled that upon first hearing news of the revolt, he recognized that "all our flowers had lost their glory"; and Charles Kingsley despaired at the time that owing to the Mutiny, "I feel as if I could dogmatise no more"—an extraordinary concession for a Victorian. The Mutiny transformed the British approach to India and reshaped the character and priorities of British rule throughout the non-European empire. It embittered the British and permanently soured the imperial project. In their minds they had shown India the path toward progress and had been bloodily rebuffed. The very peasantry they had sought to liberate had allied itself in the rebellion with its former oppressors, the landlords. The chivalry of the Raj "was that of Robin Hood, who is said to have robbed the wealthy and to have given to the poor," Lord Ellenborough, a former governor-general, noted with dismay. "Robin Hood, however, managed to secure the favour of those to whom he gave his loot. We managed to make them as hostile as those we plundered." And the British reluctantly concluded that the liberal goals for which they had striven in India were pointless in this incorrigibly alien and hidebound society. Having learned this apparent lesson regarding the limits of social engineering, the Raj abruptly retreated from its high-flown aims and determined that if it was to hold on to India, it must conciliate those who had shown they still commanded the people's loyalty: the great landlords and the princes, "however tyrannical they may be," as Lytton argued unhappily.

To Cannadine, this policy, so completely at odds with the methods and goals of pre-Mutiny rule, demonstrates that the Raj "regarded the established order much more favorably ... as something that ought to be promoted and preserved," as something "to cherish," and that the princes and the aristocracy "were no longer reviled ... but acclaimed as familiar and traditional." But it's impossible to survey the papers of policymakers or the historiography on this subject without being struck repeatedly by the distaste and resignation with which the British lapsed into a

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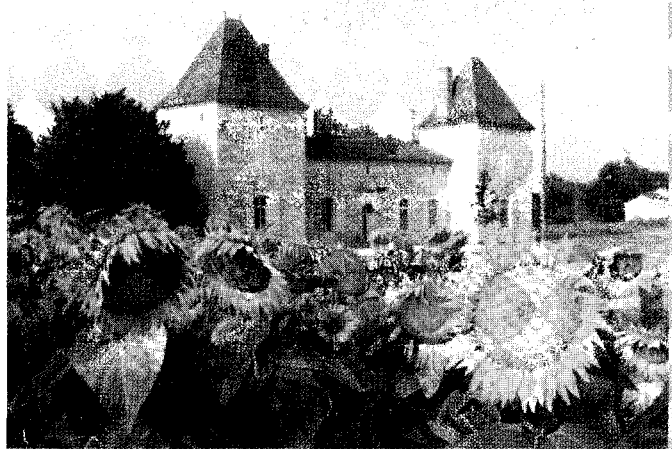
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policy dictated by what they saw as political necessity. The argument of an agent of the Punjab government in 1860—that radical, Westernizing reform would not buy “political security,” and that despite their oppression of “the people,” the aristocrats had to be appeased, because they “exercise great influence,” and must be made to “constitute a strong support to the existing Government”—was echoed by senior imperial officials. And some officials failed to be swayed even by arguments of expedience: Sir John Strachey, the most powerful force in the Indian Civil Service and the most trusted adviser of two viceroys, was so contemptuous of the Indian aristocrats and princes that he never forsook his opposition to their being cultivated as supporters.

By removing from their hard-headed political context the ceremonies and titles intended to attach the “influential classes” more firmly to the Raj, Cannadine again confuses pragmatism with ideology; and by focusing on the ornaments of empire, he misapprehends the nature of the conservatism that informed British imperial rule from the Mutiny well into the twentieth century. When the Mutiny was put down, the goal of the Raj—and of British rule throughout the dominions of conquest—changed from what was by then regarded as the lofty and risky aim of rapid political and cultural transformation to the safer and more sensible goal of efficient administration and material improvement. Because British-imposed liberal reform had apparently contributed to the revolt, officials in London decided there was no point in offering to foreign peoples that which they didn’t want. The Raj’s policy of regeneration had been “well inspired” and its “principles right,” the British official Charles Raikes concluded, but the Mutiny had exposed “the fatal error of attempting to force the policy of Europe on the people of Asia.”

Paradoxically, as British rule became less liberal, it became in many ways more tolerant. The Queen’s proclamation of 1858, in response to the Mutiny, attempted to appease Indians by disclaiming “the right and the desire to impose Our convictions on any of Our

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subjects." Those convictions included not only Christianity but also parliamentary democracy. Macaulay's intolerance of Indian culture had been matched by his hope that Indians could be anglicized and hence trained to rule themselves. But the new ethos held that, as the British socialist leader Ramsay MacDonald asserted in 1898, parliamentary institutions "can no more be carried to India by Englishmen ... than they can carry ice in their luggage." Rather than directly aiming to transform Indians or Egyptians into Englishmen, this new philosophy held that the best that British rule could provide was a permanent guardianship, an honest, unsympathetic, and unattractive officialism of political stability, solid finances, severe justice, even-handed taxation, and better irrigation ("somewhat grim presents for one people to make to another," Stephen acknowledged). The workaday and practical mantra of this new outlook was good government, rather than self-government. This, not ornamentalism, was the ethos of the empire in what Cannadine calls its "heyday," from the Mutiny to 1914. Even the great "ornamentalist" viceroy, Lord Curzon, declared that "efficiency" was "our gospel, the keynote of our administration." This illiberal vision of imperial rule aimed for sound government by a handful of foreigners in service to what Curzon called "the patient, humble, silent millions." Melding with the public school celebration of stoic duty, this vision made of imperial rule not a glittering endeavor but a stern task in which to persevere, a service that its recipients would inevitably meet with sullen rejection. Imbued with this new ethos, the British embraced their mundane chores and felt a defiant pride in being unloved by their subjects. Rudyard Kipling wrote this philosophy's most un-ornamental anthem:

Take up the White Man's burden—
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper—
The tale of common things ...
Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard.

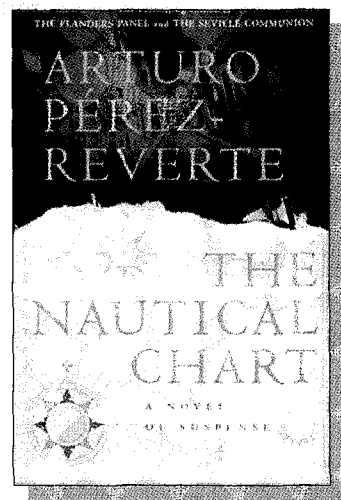
But even as the cold vision of the financier and the administrator replaced the heady optimism of the political philosopher, this new ethos—although it held that for reasons of political safety, foreign rule must be less obtrusive—hardly embraced tradition and a vision of organic, conservative native societies, as Cannadine would have it. In fact, those guided by this ethos put faith in Lyall's point that Britain's rule in itself would act as a "dissolving force." Britain's dominion, bringing with it nothing more stirring than public works and an obsessive pursuit of "sound finances," would slowly ("Ah, slowly!" Kipling lamented) but inexorably effect a revolution by disintegrating customs and mores. Cannadine writes of the "cult" of the "timeless" "Burkeian" Indian village "celebrated" by and "intrinsically appealing to the British"; but Stephen allowed that the rule of law was breaking down the traditional village communities, and looked upon that result with enormous satisfaction. And even the high Indian official and legal anthropologist Henry Maine, whom Cannadine holds up as a celebrant of traditional Indian life, actually looked forward to a prolonged period of British rule that would free rural India from the constraints of tradition.

Cannadine rightly argues that recent scholarly imperial history has overemphasized the "racism" of British policymakers. Certainly most British officials were racist by our enlightened standards, but making the study of history a prosecutorial endeavor obfuscates far more than it illuminates. And his plea that the history of the British Empire be more fully integrated into the history of Britain itself than has recently been done should be attended to by this generation of scholars. However, in writing a short but sweeping book "concerned with recovering the world view ... of those who dominated and ruled the empire," Cannadine should have more closely followed the injunction of the most brilliant dissectors of the "official mind" of imperialism, Robinson and Gallagher: "We must turn from the sophistications of social analysis to the humbler tasks of chronology. We must learn the grammar of the policymakers and construe their texts." ■

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THE NEW COUNTERCULTURE

The rapid growth of the home-schooling movement owes much to the energy and organizational skills of its Christian advocates

BY MARGARET TALBOT

.....

In the 1980s, when newspapers and magazines first started reporting on parents who had rejected school in favor of teaching their children at home, it seemed that the movement would never last—or if it lasted, would never grow. More and more mothers were working outside the home. More and more parents, especially in the upper middle class, were fretting about their children's pursuit of academic excellence and healthy socialization, while simultaneously outsourcing the management of both to recognized experts and paid caregivers. It did not seem an auspicious time for a movement that demanded the intensive labor of mothers willing to forgo careers and income; that set little store by certification, licensing, degrees, and other signifiers of professional expertise; that took pride in a kind of rustic do-it-yourselfism; and that, even in its large, conservative Christian wing, held fast to the progressive-educational notion of not rushing kids into academics too early. Like so many other self-conscious reversions to the way of our forebears, the home-schooling movement seemed destined to sputter out.

Instead it has developed over the past decade or so into a surprisingly vigorous counterculture. In 1985 about 50,000 children nationwide were learning at home. Current estimates range from 1.5 to 1.9 million. (The former is probably the more reliable number, though precision is hard to come by because neither the census nor any other national survey distinguishes between home-schooled children and others.) By comparison, charter schools—the most celebrated alternative in public schooling—enroll only about 350,000 students. Patricia Lines, a former Department of Education researcher who has studied home schooling since the mid-1980s,

points to evidence, such as Florida's annual survey of home schoolers, suggesting that the population of kids learning at home is growing by 15 to 20 percent a year. Moreover, home schoolers as a group are extraordinarily committed—not only to educating their children as they see fit but also to building and sustaining organizations. They have founded thousands of local support groups across the country,

along with an influential lobbying and legal-defense organization, dozens of publishers and curriculum suppliers, and six nationally circulated magazines. By now it seems reasonable to agree with Lines that "the rise of homeschooling is one of the most significant social trends of the past half century."

KINGDOM OF CHILDREN: CULTURE AND CONTROVERSY IN THE HOMESCHOOLING MOVEMENT

by Mitchell L. Stevens
Princeton, 241 pages,
\$24.95

To understand why this should be so, it helps first of all to give up on the idea of home schooling as a throw-back. It's true that mandatory school attendance is a relatively new phenomenon in the broad sweep of history, and that during the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries most American children acquired what learning they got—precious little if they came from laboring or farming families—at home. The first common schools in the United States were established in the 1840s, but it was not until the early twentieth century, in the first flush of Progressivism, that most states legislated compulsory education, and even then many of the laws covered only a few months of the year. It is true, as the Web site of the Home School Legal Defense Association reminds us, that "American history is full of men and women who were taught at home, from colonial patriot Patrick Henry to President John Quincy Adams to inventor Thomas Edison"—although many of them were taught not by parents but by tutors, which is rather a different thing.



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Yet for all the claims that it is resurrecting a hallowed American tradition, for all its old-timey affections (the home-schooling activist Michael Farris once felt compelled to warn home schoolers against un-Christian bragging about baking their own bread), home schooling is a distinctly modern, even forward-looking movement. It is modern in some superficial ways, such as in its use of the Internet to pass along curricula and teaching tips and to create instant support networks. And it is modern in some deeper ways—for example, in its capacity to fulfill needs that could have arisen only in our present social circumstances. Those include the need many parents feel to shield their families from a commercial culture they regard as soulless, acquisitive, overly sexualized, and corrosive of family ties. And, as Mitchell Stevens shows in *Kingdom of Children*, his readable sociological survey of the movement, they include the needs of many American women, mostly conservative Christians, whose beliefs do not permit them to work outside the home but whose aspirations have nonetheless been shaped by feminism and its discontents.

But that's to get ahead of the story. Though they tend to dominate it now, conservative Christians were not home schooling's pioneers. Its first inspiration came from 1960s leftists such as Ivan Illich, Paul Goodman, and A. S. Neill, the founder of the British free school at Summerhill. Many of these innovators started out as critics of subpar schools for the urban poor and became critics of formal education itself—tests, grades, curricula, the very idea that a specific body of knowledge ought to be transmitted from adults to children. Among them was a childless patrician writer named John Holt, who became the first home-schooling activist. Holt was born in New York City in 1923, and, although he later refused to say what schools he had attended, on the grounds that they had taught him nothing, his obituaries revealed that he had enrolled at Phillips Exeter Academy and graduated from Yale with a degree in industrial engineering. After a stint teaching fifth-graders at two private

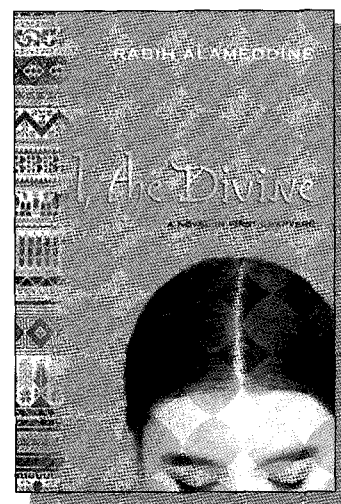
schools in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Holt emerged as an impassioned, slightly moony school reformer, the author of the best-selling diary-style books *How Children Fail* (1964) and *How Children Learn* (1967). "What is essential is to realize that children learn independently, not in bunches," he wrote, "that they learn out of interest and curiosity, not to please or appease the adults in power, and that they ought to be in control of their own learning; deciding for themselves what they want to learn and how they want to learn it." Holt had a Salingeresque softness for kids, whom he regarded as superior in every way to adults. Children "are better at [learning] than we are," he said; left to their own devices, they would learn their little hearts out.

By the late 1970s Holt had abandoned any hope that schools themselves would allow children to learn what they wanted to at their own pace and in their own admirably childish spirit, and had begun urging parents to "unschool" at home. His timing was just right, because many former sixties radicals were by then turning to hearth and home. As the founder of a magazine called *Growing Without Schooling*, Holt went on to guide a loose congregation of hippie parents across the country as they took their children's education into their own experimental, studiously nonauthoritarian hands. These first home educators were suspicious of institutions, Rousseauvian in their pedagogy, and big on learning by doing, whether it was milking goats or weaving a wall hanging or digging a well. They were the kinds of people who thought of themselves as "alternative," who met one another at the food co-op or at La Leche League meetings or at folk-dance fundraisers for Guatemalan refugees. Their world, as Stevens puts it, was "a small world now, short on cash, physical plants, and new blood, but still a hotly idealistic and quietly optimistic place," and Holt's child-centered, liberationist teachings resonated there.

At the same time, two other critics of conventional schooling, Raymond and Dorothy Moore, were launching a campaign against sending children to

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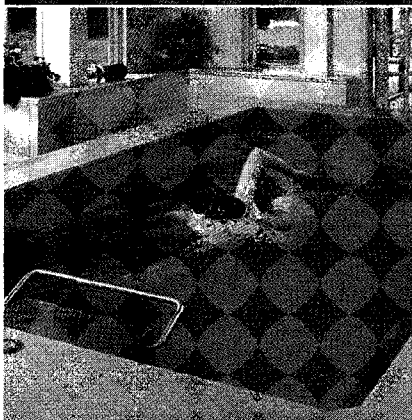
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school in the early grades. The Moores were educational researchers and Seventh-Day Adventists. As young parents living in Tokyo in the 1940s, they had kept their children out of school and had never regretted the decision. Schools, they argued, were factory-like places, from which the "instinctual" knowledge and casual intimacy of family was coldly, and disastrously, excluded. "The tendency for most schools and similar institutions is to make the child's program rigid," they wrote. "This is a necessary feature of mass production. The youngster's activity for much of the day is focused in a few square feet area around his desk, and timed out to the minute." The Moores believed that children were developmentally unable to conform to such routines or to benefit from formal academic instruction until they had reached the "integrated maturity level," which differed from child to child but might be as late as age ten or twelve. If children were hustled into school nonetheless, and then overlooked by busy teachers, the likely results were learning disabilities, nearsightedness, and behavior problems such as hyperactivity. In this the Moores sounded like Holt and other critics who regarded schools as engines of conformity, too big and impersonal to meet the needs of the individual child.

But the Moores were also harbingers of home schooling's quite different future. Unlike Holt and his followers, they were religious conservatives who worried that schools undercut the authority of parents and forced children to face peer pressure before they were able to withstand it. The Moores first gained a national reputation with a 1972 article in *Harper's* magazine. But their great breakthrough occurred in the early 1980s, when James Dobson started inviting the Moores to speak on his nationally syndicated radio program, *Focus on the Family*. With Dobson's immense reach, the Moores' message found an eager audience among the evangelicals and fundamentalists of the new Christian right. For these converts home schooling offered the possibility of editing out evolutionary theory, secular humanism, and other knowledge they

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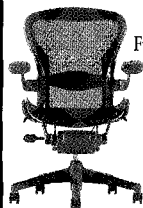
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abhorred, while reviving or reinventing a model of learning that encouraged children to cleave to their families and keep the blandishments of consumerism at arm's length. Conservative Christians understood that it was easier to strengthen the influence of families against that of pop culture if families had something explicit and comprehensive to *do*, and education was the obvious function.

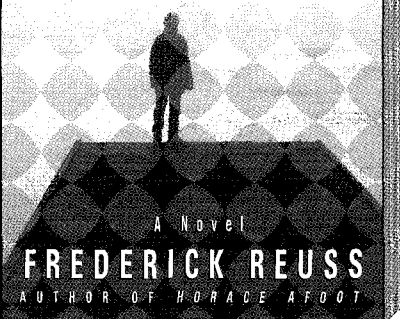
Christian home schoolers brought new energy and much-improved organizational skills to the movement. It was thanks to them, and particularly to the Home School Legal Defense Association, that home schooling earned the legal status it enjoys today. The Constitution offers broad guarantees of parents' right to direct their children's education, and the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld those guarantees in cases involving, for example, the rights of the Old Order Amish and other religious minorities to keep their children out of public school. Still, in 1983 only four states had laws explicitly permitting home education. In the early days many of the Holtian "unschoolers" fashioned themselves as a kind of underground. (Holt himself, in one of his more distasteful analogies, championed the notion of a "new Underground Railroad to help children escape from schools.") Some unschoolers courted prosecution under truancy laws. Christian home schoolers, however, tended to want legal recognition for their interpretation of parents' rights, and they got it. By 1993 home education was legal in all fifty states, subject to varying degrees of regulation.

For a while the two wings of the movement cooperated, bound together by their mutual skepticism toward mainstream education. But by the early 1990s the unschoolers were complaining in their publications that conservative white Christians had become the face of the movement. This was true—for the simple reason that white Christians had become the overwhelming majority among home schoolers. In a 1995 study of home educators the sociologist Maralee Mayberry found that 84 percent believed the Bible was literally true, 78 percent said they went to church at

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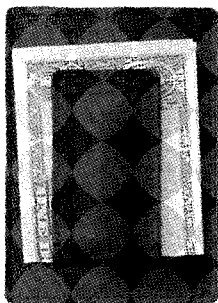
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least once a week, and 98 percent were white. Later studies have confirmed, as Stevens puts it, that home schooling is "statistically associated with white, religious, two-parent households." Home-schooling parents are not, as a rule, any wealthier than the American norm, but they do tend to have more years of education. (A sizable minority have teaching degrees.) And their families are larger than average: the majority have three or more children. Conservative Christians have become the new counterculture, far more vital than what remains of the 1960s version, and home schooling is their most successful alternative institution.

Despite its precipitate growth, however, comparatively little has been written about home schooling, and what there is tends to focus on more or less measurable outcomes for the kids. Do they make friends? Go to college? Feel like weirdoes? Learn what they're supposed to learn? Score well on standardized tests? On this last point, as it happens, the evidence is fairly strong, and coverage of it has helped to win a grudging social acceptance for teaching outside of school. The news that home-schooled kids had been dominating national spelling and geography bees, and that several surveys showed them scoring higher than the national average on standardized tests, including the SAT, got plenty of press.

In contrast, almost nothing has been written about home schooling as a social movement with its own utility for adults. Stevens, a professor of sociology at Hamilton College, spent ten years interviewing home-schooling families, watching them teach, pitching tents at their summer camps, hanging out at their conferences, and reading their publications. He has written a careful, intelligent book that fills that gap, seeking to explain "what homeschooling means to the people who do it." The book suffers, unfortunately, from the constraints of Stevens's discipline, at least as he interprets them. To protect the privacy of his subjects, he says, he resorts to pseudonyms and alters biographical details. At any rate, vivid descriptions of people and places don't seem to be his forte.

But his analysis is often fascinating, especially when it comes to what women who home school get out of it. Most of the women Stevens interviewed never seriously considered working outside the home after they had children. Full-time motherhood had in some cases been their goal and ideal since childhood, and was often inseparable from their conservative Protestant religious beliefs. To be a godly woman meant to put child-rearing above ambition and acquisition, and sound child-rearing required the devotion of steady, unfragmented attention. "Love is spelled T-I-M-E," as one home-schooling family's Web site puts it. "We give ourselves to our children while they are young and need our instruction ... By the time they complete the high school years they are firmly anchored in GOD'S WORD, and have learned to stand against the world."

Deeply immersed in these values as they were, however, the women Stevens interviewed were hardly immune to the more mainstream ideals of womanhood shaped in part by liberal feminism. Like their contemporaries who had chosen to combine outside careers with the raising of children, they felt the attractions of using their minds and education in systematic, diligent ways; of possessing a sense of purpose independent from their husbands; and of avoiding the tedium of housecleaning. The daily life of, say, the stereotypical 1950s housewife, trussed up in an apron and a short strand of pearls, seemed pallid and irrelevant to them, too. They wanted, as several women told Stevens, to be recognized as more than "just moms." Home schooling was in some ways the perfect solution—a souped-up domesticity with higher stakes and more respect. Though it did not afford economic autonomy, it did offer an intellectual outlet. And it provided social, political, and even entrepreneurial opportunities—through the home-schooling movement's local associations; its frequent conferences, retreats, and multi-family field trips; and its expanding market for new teaching materials, guidebooks, and the like, many of which home-schooling mothers write.

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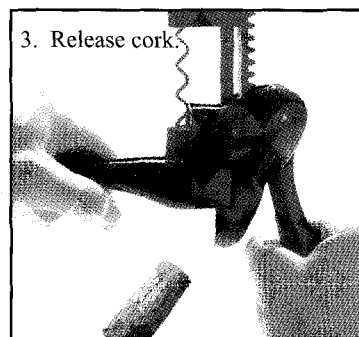
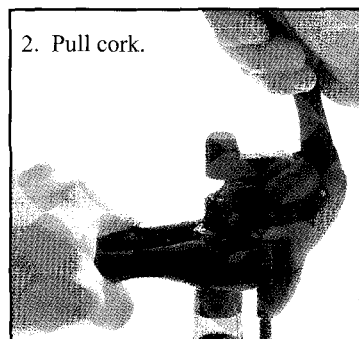
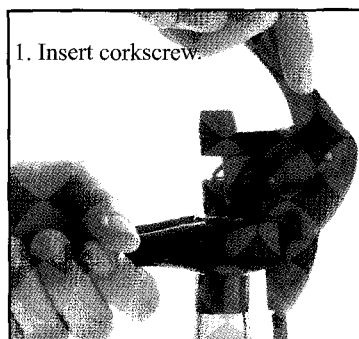
It's true that the work is formidable—the basic care and feeding of young children is labor-intensive enough even when one is not solely responsible for educating them. And mother-teachers do seem to get more respect within the home-schooling world than teachers and child-care workers get in the larger world. This is particularly true in the Christian wing of the movement, where women's teaching role is seen as sanctified by God. "Women are admonished to be committed full-time to their children," Stevens observes, "but their submission to God's plan is also explicitly recognized and celebrated from pulpits and on the pages of [the movement's own] glossy magazines." Moreover, fathers are actively encouraged to help their wives in whatever way the wives find useful, since the job of training young minds is regarded as both singularly important and singularly demanding. Christian home schoolers are "refreshingly explicit about the human costs of raising children," Stevens found. "They devote considerable energy to explaining why children 'need' full-time mothers, and they also are careful to celebrate the doing of that work." (The unschoolers, in contrast, tended to celebrate the creativity of the child over the labors of the mother.)

In the end, *Kingdom of Children* suggests that the benefits of home schooling may be greater for women than for children or for society in general. To be fair, Stevens doesn't even pose the comparison. But it is surely worth some tentative evaluation—especially if the movement continues to grow. Home-schooled kids, I think it's fair to say, are all right. They do well on tests, and they go on to fancy colleges when they want to; admissions officers and professors like them because they are self-motivated and have good study habits. Home-schooled kids watch less television than their peers and—though this has not been measured—are, I suspect, less likely to be medicated with Ritalin and other drugs whose function has at least something to do with classroom management.

I don't think we need worry much about their socialization in the narrow sense, either. With the exception of a

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few wackos in the Idaho panhandle, home-schooling parents are not bent on isolating their children, and most home-schooled kids make friends through the Scouts or church groups or volunteering. Indeed, in a study conducted a few years ago the sociologists Christian Smith and David Sikkink found that home-schooling families are actually more enmeshed in their communities than public school families. They are more likely, for example, to have voted in the previous five years, participated in an ongoing community-service activity, or gone to the public library. And the few psychological studies that have looked at categories such as "self-concept" and sociability have detected no problems and some advantages for home-schooled kids. It would be ill-advised to set much store by such studies, given the difficulty of measuring something like self-concept, but at least they don't raise any alarms.

More difficult, I think, is the question of whether home schooling poses any sort of a problem for society—a threat to social cohesion, for example, or a brain drain from the public schools. Smith and Sikkink's study suggests that there is little reason to worry that home schooling diverts people from civic life. What may be more worrisome is the prospect that home schooling will attract new recruits motivated mainly by disenchantment with the quality of their public schools. There is some evidence that recent converts to home schooling fit this profile. In a Florida state survey conducted from 1995 to 1996, for example, "dissatisfaction with public school" edged out "religious" motivations for the first time as the leading reason for home schooling.

For ideologically or religiously motivated home schoolers, keeping their kids out of school is not a consumer's whim; it's the exercise of a constitutionally sanctioned right to guide their children's education in accordance with their most deeply held beliefs. And in a democratic society only considerations as profound as those are significant enough to outweigh the potential harm of sectarianism. The decision to home school also represents a complicated but reasonable

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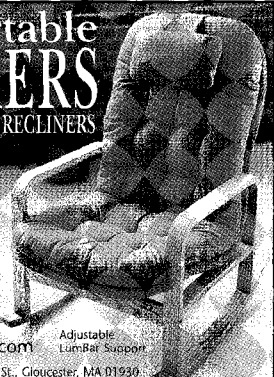
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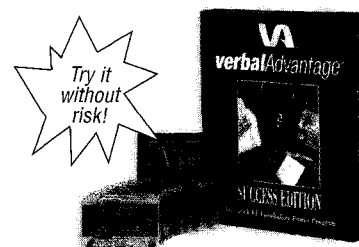
compromise with the rest of us. Rather than agitate to get Darwinism out of the public schools, for example, conservative Christian home schoolers may opt to withdraw from them while continuing (for the most part) to pay taxes that support those schools and to participate in civic and political life. Moreover, as Stevens shows, home schooling offers some conservative Christian women, whose values prevent them from working outside the home, a measure of fulfillment and autonomy that they might not otherwise enjoy—a social good in itself. If the rest of us (people nursing vague beefs with the public schools, people without a powerful religious or ideological justification) started pulling our kids out of the schools, I doubt it would serve any social good at all.

Secular liberals may not much care for the particular forms of social capital that evangelicals and fundamentalists build, but build them they do. And if one shares the worry that the American citizenry is growing more selfish and monadic, the home schoolers' brand of civic participation is no small thing. Of course, one might argue that the home schoolers' activism is too narrow and self-interested to count as social capital. But that may be too narrow a way of thinking. As Smith and Sikkink argue,

American democracy thrives on the widespread participation of its citizens in a host of *different kinds* of associations that mediate between the individual and the state, often even when those associations are not manifestly political or liberal ... [T]he experience of association and participation itself tends to socialize, empower, and incorporate citizens in ways that stimulate democratic self-government, even if they involve some particularity and conflict in the process.

Besides, Christian home schoolers embody a coherent, living critique of mainstream education and child-rearing that can be bracing, a model of carefully negotiated, mildly irritating separateness, of being in but not of modern consumer society. For the rest of us, the tensions that creates may be the most useful thing about them. **A**

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

*A gritty, dark, and comic novel of the Other America;
Naipaul's sunny vision; four tales by a master of American prose*

.....

The Irish writer Michael Collins's U.S. debut novel is set in post-1970s small-town America, in the ripped-out heartlands where heavy industry has fallen away, to be replaced by the service industry—burger chains, strip joints, and, indeed, the Curl Up and Dye beauty parlor. The narrator, Bill, whose earnest amateur philosophizing perfectly conveys the mismatch of his wayward intelligence, is intent on writing an elegy for his country; or, perhaps, a wake-up call. But because he works for a local newspaper (called, perhaps heavy-handedly, the *Daily Truth*), he has constantly to be reminded that facts, not discourses, are the order of the day; a colleague sardonically remarks that his writing is “ambitious beyond the scope of journalism as we know it.”

Collins searingly evokes the death of a small post-industrial town. He sketches, through an accumulation of precisely observed details, the cowed and crippled lives of people reduced to nostalgia and appetite. He has written a political novel about apolitical people who seemingly sleepwalk through their own defeat. But Bill needs shaking from torpor: “I had some things I wanted to say all my life. Problem was, I never had a story equal to my ideas.”

Driving bake-offs and baseball games from the dull front pages, that story arrives in the form of a missing-persons case. The local bad boy has, apparently, killed and dismembered his father, although only a finger has been found. The moribund town is briefly energized by excitement, rumor, prurience; and the *Truth* becomes nationally important, and Bill's stories are syndicated nationwide. But Bill becomes entangled with the suspects and witnesses



THE KEEPERS OF THE TRUTH

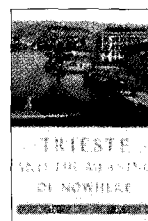
by Michael Collins

Scribner, 304 pages, \$13.00

who were supposed to be his story, and events unfold calamitously. Collins produces an unnerving atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion, made the more disturbing by its being filtered through Bill's not wholly reliable mind. Bill, it seems, cannot trust anyone; nor can a reader entirely trust Bill.

Bill's overblown narration, slightly annoying at first, becomes both comical and unsettling as we learn more about him. It also enables Collins to risk, successfully, an elegiac tone of romantic yearning while keeping his eye on the grimly funny details of ordinary life. (A high point of these mock-heroics is a speech Bill gives at Lakeview Community College, in which he drunkenly overturns a podium and a pitcher of water, curses and berates his audience, and finally vomits into a trash can. He later describes this fiasco, deadpan, as “what I like to consider my lecture on ‘The Discourse of Language.’”) This book, in the words of its narrator, is “an almighty ... roar of despair”; but it is also intelligent, witty, humane, and utterly haunting. —ROBERT POTTS

With what she says is her final book, the eminent travel writer, historian, and essayist Jan Morris closes a riveting literary career, which led from reporting Sir Edmund Hillary's 1953 ascent of Everest for *The Times* of London to some forty books, including classics such as her Pax Britannica trilogy and her profiles of Hong Kong, Sydney, and Venice. *Trieste*, the slightly melancholic farewell of a superb writer to the art and craft she graced for much of the twentieth century, is Morris at the peak of her form; it is both a thorough tale of the Italian city that long served as the leading seaport of the



TRIESTE AND THE MEANING OF NOWHERE

by Jan Morris

Simon & Schuster
208 pages, \$23.00

Hapsburg Empire—and was home for a time to James Joyce and Sir Richard Burton, among many other colorful personalities—and a glancing portrait of Morris herself, who loves Trieste in part because its vigor has passed and it is a city of ghosts and memories.

Morris's approach is to combine a sharp eye for detail with an easy scholarship and a graceful, authoritative prose voice, and so to bring a city, its history, and its people to life. Throughout her stories she explores the nature of exile, the “nonsense of nationalism,” the necessary disorder of great cities. And she re-creates scenes and events: Nora Joyce waiting forlornly at the train station while her husband wanders off to get drunk with sailors in the Piazza Grande, and that same train station eighty-five years later, a booming international black market for blue jeans; hundreds of Jews quietly murdered by the Nazis in the old rice-treatment plant at San Sabba, eerily close to the city's ancient Jewish cemetery; the Emperor Franz Joseph's brother Maximilian reluctantly departing Trieste in 1864 to become the Emperor of Mexico.

“The books I have written are no more than smudged graffiti on a wall, and I shall write no more of them,” Morris concludes. Her retirement at age seventy-five is understandable, but it is also a great loss to readers who have long savored Morris's lean, informed prose. This is a lovely last song. —BRIAN DOYLE

“You can keep your socks on,” a prostitute instructs the raw Willie Chandran, an Indian immigrant and the protagonist of V. S. Naipaul's first work of fiction in seven years. *Half Brahmin*, half *Untouchable*, Willie arrives in London in the late 1950s, and immediately immerses himself in that era's “bohemian-immigrant life,” which for him includes sleeping with his friends' girlfriends or with prostitutes. In the first half of this novel the parallels between Willie's life and that of his creator are unmistakable:



HALF A LIFE

by V. S. Naipaul
Knopf, 224 pages,
\$24.00

An aspiring writer from the imperial hinterlands journeys to London and gets involved with literary types, most of whom turn out to be self-aggrandizing schemers and fakirs. His initial attempts to publish his stories are curtly rebuffed: "India," he's told, "isn't really a subject." Ultimately, though, he places his work with a small Marxist press—at which point his life deviates dramatically from Naipaul's.

Having engaged in a surreptitious and brutal sex life, Willie bumbles along passively and marries the first woman who admires his writing. He then follows her—a mixed-race Portuguese-African—to her estate in one of Portugal's East African outposts. Here he is no less an outsider than he was in London or India. Colonialism is coming to an end, rebellion is simmering, and in no time Willie discovers the real Africa, which resembles an uglier and more extreme version of London, minus the Britannic gentility. The dark center of this book is race. The novel brims with stereotypes certain to make most of us uncomfortable, with Africans faring the worst by far (the men are sex-charged, the women sluts). Apparently not even colonialism could save Africa from itself. Yet Naipaul is no kinder to the European interlopers, and his novel as a whole amounts to a sneer at hypocrites of every stripe. Hardly a single character escapes the authorial lash, and typically enough, the only decent person in the book—Willie's wife—is humiliated and alone at the end.

Half a Life has a few problems, including some stilted dialogue and a scrambled, distracting chronology. But Naipaul's style is so frank it seems intimate, and the awful characters are studied and well crafted. Behind the matter-of-fact style is a cuttingly ironic view of human relations, and occasionally the author's voice simply overwhelms his narrator's. Yet when Naipaul talks, we listen, and speaking through the guise of a fictional character may be the least offensive way for him to tell us what he thinks. Here he assigns Willie the task of moral spokesman and watches him screw up—a handy reminder that in Naipaul's world a despicable fool is the best possible candidate for Everyman. —DIANE MEHTA

John Edgar Wideman's *Hoop Roots* is something of an extended improvisation, a memoir in which narrative is less important than feeling, and every action is amplified by the emotional associations it evokes. Spanning nearly fifty years of personal history, the book seeks to trace its author's lifelong love affair with basketball, although sometimes basketball disappears, yielding to reflections on family, racial tension, memory, and the nebulous territory of storytelling itself. In Wideman's hands basketball becomes not just a game but a folk art, with its own vernacular. "Like classic African-American jazz," he writes, "playground hoop is a one time, one more time thing. Every note, move, solo, pat of the ball happens only once. Unique. Gone as soon as it gets here. Like a river you can't enter twice in the same spot."

Wideman's expansive view of basketball allows him to link the game not only to jazz but to minstrel shows, Yoruba beading, and even Sunday services at the "Homewood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church." Yet as in so much of his previous writing, the most vivid connections he makes here are to inner-city Pittsburgh, where he was raised in a family of strong women and largely absent men. For Wideman, this is the key to everything; as he suggests, "We went to the playground court to find our missing fathers. We didn't find them but we found a game and the game served us as a daddy of sorts." Even if he never quite sells us on this point, he does make a compelling case for the importance of family, wherever he finds it—whether in the hard-edged camaraderie of the playground or in the silence of his grandmother's sickroom. In attempting to discover a balance between these opposing landscapes (outside and freedom, home and responsibility), Wideman reveals his own contradictory impulses—to be accepted and to stand apart. In *Hoop Roots* he offers a fluid glimpse of this process, which even now continues to enlarge him and his relationship with the game. —DAVID L. ULIN



HOOP ROOTS
by John Edgar Wideman
Houghton Mifflin
242 pages, \$24.00

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Early in this graceful suite of short novels a narrator comments, "History is not just lived; it's also wished." This aphorism duly adumbrates one of Allan Gurganus's long-standing preoccupations, which he explores throughout this book with his usual wit, spot-on period detail, and jeweled prose: the utterly personal, and thus malleable, quality of the past.

All these novellas deal with aspects of gay life, and Gurganus's most important accomplishment here may be in giving the closet life of gays historical and metaphorical resonance, imbuing the secret-keeping of families and society with broad moral dimensions and lyrical possibility. By avoiding the pitfalls of both victim politics and frivolous campiness while remaining sensitive to the real victims of homophobia and to the real joys of homosexuality, he has written an entertaining, disturbing, and inspiring book—a dazzling maturation from his folksy *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (1989) and his square *White People* (1991). Finally, in literary terms *The Practical Heart* lets us see one of our greatest living raconteurs revitalize the neglected novella form, using a dense, elided, deeply American prose that is as intriguing as it is deadly funny. —BILL BROUN



**THE PRACTICAL
HEART: FOUR
NOVELLAS**

by Allan
Gurganus

Knopf, 352 pages,
\$25.00

With *The Emigrants* (1996), the first of his books to appear in English, the German writer W. G. Sebald emerged as a figure remarkable both for his unforced moral gravity and for the freedom with which he crossed generic boundaries. Fiction, memoir, biography, travel—it has never been clear just where in his work the borders lie, or, indeed, if they exist at all. *Austerlitz* looks more like a novel than anything else Sebald has yet produced; but still one balks at such an



AUSTERLITZ

by W. G. Sebald,
translated by
Anthea Bell

Random House
304 pages, \$25.95

easy definition. Almost all of it describes a nameless narrator's conversations with the title character, an architectural historian and compulsive photographer, whom the narrator first meets in the waiting room of a Belgian train station. At the start Jacques Austerlitz seems as detached from the personal as it's humanly possible to be. He talks expansively about nineteenth-century buildings and keeps working away at "endless preliminary sketches" for a great study of the "family likeness" between such places as "law courts and penal institutions ... opera houses and lunatic asylums." But he will not, the narrator says, "tell me very much about his origins and his own life." That is not true. It is the narrator who resists describing his own circumstances, saying only that he was born in Germany but now lives in England, as does Sebald himself. In contrast, Austerlitz will eventually tell all that he knows, and will tell more as he learns more, as his research slides open the dead bolts of his 1930s childhood and a past that "will not ... has not passed away." The Holocaust remains the ghost on every page Sebald writes; and in his learned eccentricity Austerlitz is something like an afterimage of Walter Benjamin.

Sebald makes no typographical distinction between Austerlitz's words and the narrator's, presenting their conversations without quotation marks and almost without paragraphs; it is as if they have disappeared into each other's voices. It seems both pointless and inevitable to wonder if these talks ever actually took place; doubtless scholarship will someday tell us, as it will explain the enigmatic and eloquent photographs with which, as always, Sebald punctuates his text. But such knowledge will take nothing away from a melancholy at once exhilarating and too deep for tears. Anthea Bell's translation puts the slight fustiness of Sebald's German into an English that, however pellucid, is not quite of this time or quite English either—lovely. —MICHAEL GORRA

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BOOKS

A HEAD FULL OF SWIRLING DREAMS

The short-lived Robert Louis Stevenson was perhaps the most comprehensively accomplished writer in the English language

BY BRIAN DOYLE

.....

Robert Louis Stevenson was a ham-handed playwright, a less than minor poet, a fitful journalist, and the author of several awful novels. What might have been his crowning masterpiece was never finished; only a scrap of his most ambitious project was ever published; and he died young, just as his work was sharpening and deepening in startling ways.

Yet Stevenson, born in Scotland in 1850, and killed by a stroke in 1894 as he made a salad for dinner at his house in Samoa, also wrote a timeless classic of young-adult fiction (*Treasure Island*), two and a half other novels of the first rank (*Kidnapped*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*), a classic children's book of poems (*A Child's Garden of*

Verses), and an exceptional travel book (*Travels With a Donkey in the Cévennes*). He was additionally a fine essayist, a prescient political reporter, a skilled social anthropologist, a maker of historical fiction in the vein of his countryman Sir Walter Scott, an early practitioner of the modernist novel, a sharp-eyed chronicler of nature and landscape, a biographer, a historian, a prolific and hilarious letter writer, a composer of deft and poignant prayers, and even the author of horror stories. He created a handful of characters who are embedded in the popular imagination and culture: the cunning and complex pirate Long John Silver, the dashing and vain Scottish rebel Alan Breck Stewart, the bipolar Everyman Dr. Jekyll.

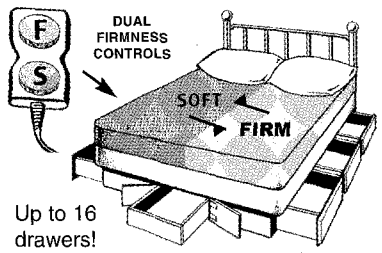
Stevenson was twenty-three when

his first magazine essay appeared, twenty-eight when his first book was published (*An Inland Voyage*, his report on a canoe trip in France), thirty-five when *Jekyll and Hyde* made him world-famous, and only forty-four when he died in the South Seas. Considering the astonishing variety of his literary achievements, we might account him the best writer our language has known—or at least the most comprehensively accomplished. That is a remarkable epitaph for a man who in his mid-twenties was known in his native Edinburgh mostly as a rake, a failed lawyer, and a “horrible atheist,” as his shocked and devoutly Presbyterian parents called their only child.

Stevenson wanted to be a writer before he could write. By age six he had dictated a history of Moses to his mother. By age ten he was inventing brief plays for a miniature theater he conducted with his cousin Bob. As a youth he was playing the “sedulous ape” to Hazlitt, Lamb, Defoe, Hawthorne, Montaigne, Baudelaire, Chaucer, Ruskin, and Swinburne—writing passages in their styles after reading their books, according to his own account.

All through my boyhood and youth, I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words ... [This] taught me (so far as I have learned them at all) the lower and less intellectual elements of the art, the choice of the essential note and the right word.

At age sixteen he wrote a brief history of the Pentland Rising, a Scottish revolt against England. At seventeen he enrolled at Edinburgh University, ostensibly to study engineering, the profession in which his family had earned national renown. The Stevensons were famed especially for their adroit work on lighthouses—beloved and crucial structures in a nation with so much rugged coast. But Louis, as his family called him to distinguish him from his exuberant cousin, was soon spending his time in bars, brothels, and the shabby offices of the student debating soci-



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ety, where he argued about literature and politics, and began to write the ornate essays he would later collect as *Virginibus Puerisque*.

It was soon clear that he was no engineer. His father insisted that he pursue an orthodox profession, and Louis dutifully passed his law examinations, was called to the bar, and entered the firm of Skene, Edwards & Bilton, in Edinburgh, where he practiced briefly and badly. In 1876 he embarked on a canoe trip through France with a friend, and very soon the law and the other travails of his life in Edinburgh faded away utterly. In France he found his voice as a writer, found a climate more suitable than dank Scotland for his ravaged lungs (he had suffered from lung disease since childhood), and found the love of his life—a married woman from a farming family in Indianapolis.

They met at the Hotel Cheillon, in Grez. Fanny Vandegrift Osbourne, married at seventeen, was thirty-six years old that summer, traveling with her son and daughter, separated from her repeatedly unfaithful husband, and mourning the recent death of her younger son. She repaired to Grez, something of an artists' colony, where one hot night in July she met Stevenson—in a scene that would not have been out of place in one of his dashing novels.

The hotel guests were gathered for dinner at a large table in the dining room; darkness fell as wine circulated and laughter rose. Then Fanny's son, Lloyd, age eight, heard a noise outside. An instant later a thin, dusty young man vaulted lightly into the room through the window and bowed to the gaping crowd. Stevenson wrote later that he had stood long in the dark outside the window that night, staring at Fanny's face, instantly smitten; and as the scholar Richard Holmes wrote dryly, "perhaps he did." Suffice it to say that Stevenson and Fanny were soon very much in love.

Her love sparked something great in him, some firming of resolve, some confidence of voice. Until his death, eighteen years later, whether confined to bed or not, he produced 400 pages a year, his cousin Graham Balfour wrote. In just his last five years, perhaps the

healthiest of his life, he wrote what his biographer J. C. Furnas estimated to be 700,000 published words—about ten books' worth of prose, poetry, political essays, and prayers. His collected works, published posthumously, ran to thirty-five volumes.

Stevenson and Fanny courted for the next three years, in France and then in America, which he crossed by train to meet her in San Francisco. (Of Nebraska he wrote with amazement, "We were at sea—there is no other adequate expression ... To one hurrying through by steam there was a certain exhilaration in this spacious vacancy, this greatness of the air, this discovery of the whole arch of heaven, this straight, unbroken, prison-line of the horizon.") Fanny finally procured a divorce in 1879, and the two were married in San Francisco in 1880, when he was twenty-nine and she forty.

They then set about over the next eight years trying to find a salubrious climate for Louis, whose health continued to deteriorate. They tried Switzerland, Scotland (where he began *Treasure Island* one rainy day after idly drawing a map of the island to amuse his stepson), France, and England (where he became a close friend to Henry James, and wrote and rewrote *Jekyll and Hyde* in a week).

In these years he was furiously busy—busier, perhaps, than he might have been healthy, for when out of bed and surrounded by visitors, he was a talker of legendary wit and range. A family friend remembered the first time she heard his voice.

Suddenly from out of a dark corner came a voice peculiar, vibrating ... I listened in perplexity and amazement. Who was this ... who talked as Charles Lamb wrote? This young Heine with the Scottish accent? I stayed long, and when I came away the unseen converser came down with me to the front door ... I saw a slender, brown, long-haired lad with great dark eyes, a brilliant smile ...

It was Stevenson at age eighteen.

He characteristically wrote beautifully of talking.

There can be no fairer ambition than to excel in talk; to be affable, gay, ready, clear and welcome ... Literature in many of its branches is no other than the shadow of good talk; but the imitation falls far short of the original

in life, freedom, and effect ... Talk is fluid, tentative, continually "in further search and progress"; while written words remain fixed, become idols even to the writer; found wooden dogmatisms, and preserve flies of obvious error in the amber of the truth ... [talk] is, indeed, both the scene and instrument of friendship ... the gauge of relations and the sport of life ... true talk, that strikes out all the slumbering best of us ... is founded as deep as love in the constitution of our being, and is a thing to relish with all our energy, while yet we have it.

Next the Stevensons spent a year in New York and New Jersey. But America proved no better for Louis's health than Europe had, and finally—perhaps in desperation, and certainly with a devil-may-care sense that he had better savor life while he could ("I wish to die in my boots ... no more Land of Counterpane for me")—Stevenson and his family chartered a private schooner and set out from San Francisco on June 28, 1888, for the South Seas, from which he would never return.

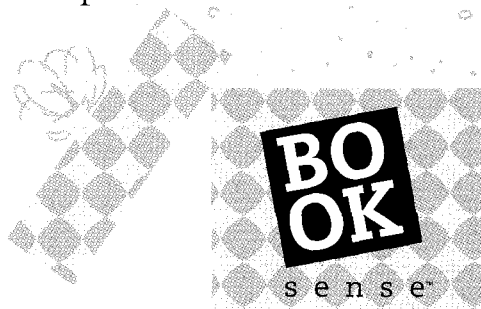
In the South Seas Stevenson found a near paradise: his health improved to the point where he could walk and ride for hours, and putter about in his woods and gardens until joyously exhausted, and spend much of his time (when not making notes for the vast book he wanted to write about the South Seas) outdoors—heaven for a lifelong invalid.

Soon he was a landowner in Samoa, having bought some 400 acres of highland forest, and the by now extended family—Louis, Fanny, her two children, her son-in-law, her grandson, and, eventually, Stevenson's mother—settled at what Stevenson called Vailima, or Five Waters. "We ... have five streams, waterfalls, precipices, profound ravines, rich tablelands ... a great view of forest, sea, mountains, the warships ... really a noble place," he wrote to a friend.

Here, over five years, leaving home only for brief voyages to Sydney and Honolulu, Stevenson wrote some ten books. Beset by writer's cramp, he often dictated to his stepdaughter, Belle, who was amazed at his ability to invent without ever faltering over a word. And the words poured out—novels, poems, travelogues. Many were left unfinished

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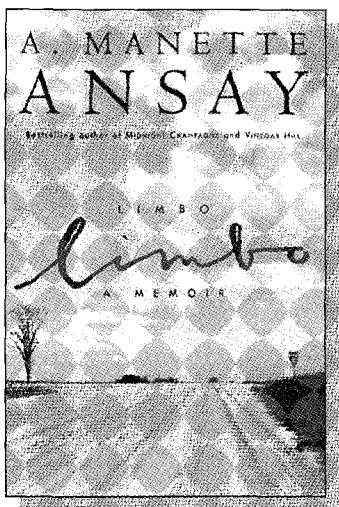


"Rock Climbing"

Trail. a. A(BUTTE)D. b. FA(STBA)LL (*bas* anag.) c. TR(y) + ACTION d. IMP(ROPE + R)LY
e. TAMER + LANE f. STAIRED (homophone) g. C + HAS + M h. LAVENDER (anag.)
i. MARCIANO (anag.) j. TRAP + DOOR (rev.) k. CALIPE(R)S (*place is* anag.) l. T(RIA +
LAND)ERROR (*air* rev.) m. AT + TICS n. L + O + OMED (*dome* anag.) o. CARG + O (*crag*
anag.) p. H + EGIRA (*gear 1* anag.) q. DRAG + ON r. ME + LANCES (*angles* anag.)
s. T(Y)PO (*top* anag.) *Guides.* t. MIN(ARETE)D u. G(RASP)ABLE v. C(RAMP)ON
w. ST(ALL)ONE x. TOPSIDER (anag.) y. SILLY (pun) *Routes.* A. BOLDER (homophone);
ROM(A)NO (*moron* anag.) B. TR + AVAIL; SCAM + P C. FOR + MICA; (s)CARES
D. T(IN)HORN; TOIL + E E. (s)LATE; TORAH (first letters); C + AC

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at his death; he liked to have several projects going at once, so that he could leap from one to another when his interest waxed or waned, as the scholar Philip Callow notes in a new biography, *Louis*, published last spring.

Some of these works were forgettable. But two were extraordinary: *The Beach at Falesá*, which he called "the first realistic South Sea story," and *The Justice-Clerk*, which was published posthumously in 1896 as *Weir of Hermiston*. In *Weir*, Stevenson's art rose to a new pitch—drawing together his beloved Scottish countryside and history with a heroine (Kirstie Elliott) who, unlike his previous female characters (mere plot devices), was a real woman—passionate, complex, and contradictory. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Jekyll and Hyde* have no real women; *Weir* is something else altogether, and readers of both sexes have mourned its truncation. The novelist Lettice Cooper in 1947 called it "remarkable not only for the power and grace of the execution, but for the brooding sense of destiny which gives it the quality of a Greek tragedy."

Stevenson's early death only highlighted the melodrama of his life. And his legend—Christopher Isherwood sneeringly dubbed him "the Dying Wanderer"—long overshadowed serious consideration of his work, despite such eloquent defenders as Henry James, G. K. Chesterton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Graham Greene, Joseph Conrad, and Jorge Luis Borges. His virtues as a craftsman were ably summed up by James ("Character, character is what he has ... [and] a singular maturity of expression that he has given to young sentiments") and Chesterton ("All his images stand out in sharp outline; and are, as it were, all edges ... The very words carry the sound and the significance. It is as if they were cut out with cutlasses"). But not until the publication of biographies by David Daiches (1947) and J. C. Furnas (1952) did Stevenson the artist of startling range begin to emerge from the colorful legend that had made him merely a popular writer of headlong adventure, as the scholar Ian Bell observed in his excellent *Dreams of Exile*, perhaps the best of the modern biographies.

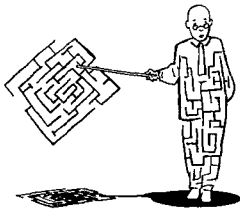
Stevenson had flaws, of course: his

female characters are generally shadows and stock pieces; he was given to longueurs; and he wrote novels with Lloyd Osbourne that are worth reading only to try to catch Stevenson flitting in and out of the generally wooden prose. As an essayist he was inclined toward homilies and sermons; as a playwright he was forgettable; as a poet he was slight except for the perfect *Child's Garden* and a handful of lovely elegies; and the fiction he set elsewhere than on islands British or Pacific is forced (*Prince Otto*, for example).

Yet in his final years he pared away mannerism and airy throwaways; his essays tautened; his fiction opened to include well-drawn women; and his nonfiction, particularly the travel accounts collected as *In the South Seas*, brought all his novelist's gifts to bear on island kings, criminals, and politics—especially the crushing effect of imperialism on vulnerable cultures. That might have been his greatest subject in the end, for he dearly loved Samoa and Samoans, and saw very clearly that what was happening on his chosen island was happening around the world.

"You don't know what news is, nor what politics, nor what the life of man, till you see it on so small a scale and with your own liberty on the board for stake," he wrote to Henry James in 1892, while a savage little war raged in Samoa, and he was likely to be imprisoned or deported. "I would not have missed it for much. And anxious friends beg me to stay at home and study human nature in Brompton drawing-rooms!"

His epic account of imperialism and the death of native culture in the Pacific was never finished, as his great Scottish novel was never finished. But Stevenson left varied greatness behind him: pulsing, vibrant, charming, passionate, and exuberant novels, poems, travelogues, and essays that will live for generations to come. Some of that work is laudably passed aloud from parents to children, but much is also thrillingly found by young readers on their own, when they open a book by Stevenson and walk with Jim Hawkins or David Balfour into an adventure that has long outlived the lively Scotsman who invented it, stretched out in his bed with a pen and paper and a head full of swirling dreams. ▀



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Full Course

When all clue answers have been placed in the grid, this puzzle will still not be finished. Solvers will need to fill in the letters missing from the shaded circuit so as to form a set of overlapping items, such as FULL-HOUSE-WORK-HORSE-RACE-COURSE. The sequence reads clockwise without regard to heavy bars, starting in the upper left corner of the circuit and ending in the same square. The unclued entry at 18 Across might be used to describe the course. Seven clue answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 149.

ACROSS

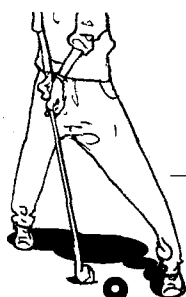
1. Prevent fight in Alaskan town (6)
5. Support second-rate competition (5)
9. At hearing, regrets trick (4)
10. Riot equipment tags are changed (4,3)
11. Hunt around shopping area for conversation (5,4)
13. Woman in front of a baseball venue (4)
15. President, swallowing booze, toasted? (6)
17. A gale disturbed aquatic life (5)
20. Link neon cross with my group (5)
22. Set shot catching back of rim (6)
29. Hindu majority holding assembly (4)
30. South American capital surrounded by green growth and insects (9)
31. Muse's ill repute after error (7)
32. Left single? (4)
33. Design set of stairs for the audience (5)
34. Followed appeal, in conclusion (6)

DOWN

1. Metal underwear chafes, ultimately (5)
2. Maker of gold figure with a magic hammer (6)
3. Collect around mile chart again (5)
4. Spring sound (4)
5. Explorer stole about a pound (6)
6. Once more, a win (5)
7. Shakespearean brute is average boxer and outlaw (7)
8. Gravelly ridge reeks badly (5)
12. Middle Eastern leader is so mournful (5)
14. Opposite tree, dropping the second penny (5)
16. Little flier covering university's opening (5)
18. Charge oaf for test (4,3)
19. Greeting songbird, start playing a tune (3,2)
21. Old note found in certain seam (6)
23. Vile creatures, excluding the primary eastern weasel (6)
24. Frost's verses (5)
25. True, a messy place is appealing (5)
26. Solid plastic heroes (5)
27. Disconcerted, auditor's done in stages (5)
28. Tube of pepper put in dessert (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

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WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

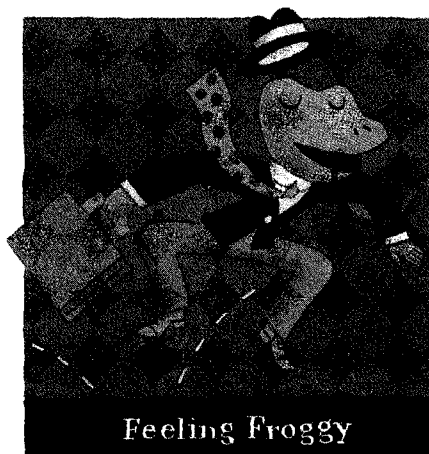
ADELINE GREEN, of Glendale, California, writes, "It seems to me that *Democrat* as an adjective is used consciously by Republicans as a term of disparagement. I am amazed that Democrats have not made an issue of this, for I believe that the use of the word in this manner has a subtle influence. Perhaps there should be an open discussion of what is either a nasty attitude or bad grammar."

Actually, Democrats, or at least leftists, do every now and then try to make an issue of this. For instance, earlier this year the syndicated columnist Molly Ivins wrote, "'Death tax' is what Republicans call the estate tax. It's one of their 'cute' things, like saying 'the Democrat Party.'" Republicans, too, have been known to object to this usage, which was popularized by Senator Joseph McCarthy. For one, William F. Buckley Jr.—a man as solidly Republican as he is astute about language—protested against the term late last year, declaring in *National Review*, "I have an aversion to '*Democrat*' as an adjective. Dear Joe McCarthy used to do that, and received a rebuke from this at-the-time 24-year-old. It has the effect of injecting politics into language, and that should be avoided. Granted there are difficulties, as when one desires to describe a 'democratic' politician, and is jolted by possible ambiguity. But English does that to us all the time, and it's our job to get the correct meaning transmitted without contorting the language."

BETTY L. PUGH, of Martinsburg, West Virginia, writes, "My mother, who majored in English in college, pronounced the word *sorbet* 'SOR-bet,' and so did I until a waiter, rather rudely, informed me that yes, the raspberry 'sor-BAY' was available. Since that time I have found that almost everyone, including a TV advertiser, says 'sor-BAY.' My *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate*

Dictionary, however, tells me that the correct pronunciation is 'SOR-bet' and the word, like *sherbet*, is of Turkish origin. Would you comment?"

Gladly. *Webster's Tenth*, the successor to your dictionary, has switched over to giving the "sor-BAY" pronunciation first, which amounts to Merriam-Webster's having changed its mind about which pronunciation it prefers—or, at least, perceives as more usual. Nonetheless, some other recent American dictionaries continue to favor "SOR-bet." I confess that I can't recall ever hearing anyone pronounce the word this way, and I



was first served sorbet many years ago, in a fancy French restaurant: the waiter presented each of us at the table with a dollop of very sweet fruit-flavored ice as a "palate cleanser" between the appetizer and the main course. Not until much later did I learn that sorbets intended to cleanse the palate needn't be sugary and French waiters needn't be pretentious.

In that long-ago waiter's defense, let it be said that although the word is indeed of Turkish origin, *sherbet* is the word that is thought to have come to us more or less directly from the Turkish, whereas *sorbet* seems to have arrived in English by way of first Italian and then French. Nonetheless, I think

I am going to start pronouncing the word "SOR-bet." Now that you've made me aware of this pronunciation, I find its straightforwardly Anglophone sound refreshing—almost as if the word itself were a palate cleanser.

ANNE WHITE, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, writes, "I have come across a new phrase, and I wonder if you have any insight into its meaning. I never heard it in New York City, but since moving here I have heard two people use *feeling froggy*."

As the *Dictionary of American Regional English* project got under way, four decades ago, researchers set to work administering language questionnaires to people all over the country. In 1969 an item about how a person who was "feeling in the best of health or spirits" might complete the sentence "I'm feeling ____" elicited the word *froggy* from a respondent in Georgia. Although the expression has never especially caught on, you'll be interested to know that in September of last year *feels froggy* appeared in the *New York Daily News*, and this past spring *feeling froggy* turned up in *USA Today*. As might be expected with slang or informal language that doesn't have wide currency and can't be found in most dictionaries, the expression's meaning, um, hops around a bit from one user to the next. Not only can *froggy* mean "chipper" or "frisky," as the *DARE* defines it, but in recent publications-database citations it often seems to be conveying an idea more nearly akin to "restless" or "lucky." These days a typical use might go something like this: "*Feeling froggy?* Then leap."

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Crammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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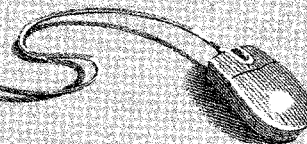
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